

S E R M O N S

O N T H E

F O L L O W I N G S U B J E C T S.

V I Z.

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| I. Rejoicing in Hope explained
and recommended. | VI. Against Conformity to the
World. |
| II. Christ's dying Prayer. | VII. The Vanity of Security
under Prosperity. |
| III. The Christian's Security. | VIII. Religious Conversation. |
| IV. Christ's Second-Coming. | IX. Improvement of Life. |
| V. The Duty and Wisdom of set-
ting the Lord always before us. | |
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By the late R E V E R E N D

Mr. T H O M A S N E W M A N.

V O L. II.

L O N D O N:

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SERMON

THE candid Reader will please to observe, that ~~the~~ reasons why this Volume begins with the *second* Sermon on Romans xii. 12. are, that the *first* Sermon on that text finishes the Author's discourses on happiness: and that the inserting the other two, would have swelled that Volume to an inconvenient size.



S E R M O N I.



Rejoicing in HOPE, explained and
recommended.



ROMANS xii. 12.

Rejoicing in Hope.



HAVE proposed to consider these SERM.
words in two views. The first I.
was, as suggesting an essential ar-
ticle of a truly happy mind, yield-
ing a just foundation for this proposition,
“ That our felicity in this life greatly depends
“ upon our hopes and comfortable prospects :
VOL. II. B “ those

SERM. "those, which we may have as men and
 I. "christians; such as we are capable of as
 "reasonable; and may be entitled to, as reli-
 "gious." We must *be able* to rejoice *in hope*,
 or in our prospects as to futurity, if we would
 attain to any *stable* satisfaction or *real* self-en-
 joyment. This I have endeavoured to evidence
 and illustrate by some particulars, which
 taken together, I apprehend, would suffici-
 ently establish the truth of the proposition.

This will receive a farther confirmation by
 considering the words in *another* view, to which
 I now proceed; in *that* in which they were
 delivered by the Apostle. And it is very evi-
 dent they stand in a catalogue of special and
 particular *duties*, enjoined as most becoming,
 and necessary, because *distinguishing* of those
 who had embraced Christianity; or according
 to the Apostle's manner of expressing it in the
 first verse, who had presented *themselves* as
 living, holy, and acceptable sacrifices unto
 God. This he designedly lays down as the
summary of Christian duty, which being *sin-*
cerely done, would have an immediate and
 powerful influence upon *every particular* one.
 Being engaged by the mercies of God, display-
 ed in the gospel of Christ, and enjoyed by
 them as embracing it, *first* to give up *themselves*
 to the Lord, they would be naturally disposed
 to

to offer up those *particular* spiritual sacrifices, SERM.
or to discharge the *several duties* of the Christ- I.
ian life, acceptable to God through Jesus
Christ. 1 Pet. ii. 5. Many of these the Apostle
then proceeds to enumerate : and amongst
these stand the words I have read, *Rejoicing*
in hope. From whence it is plain they are de-
livered by him as a *precept* ; as what is *incum-*
bent on the Christian as such ; as the *evidence*,
as well as the privilege, of our having given
up ourselves to God, and of our being *trans-*
formed, pursuant to the design of the gospel,
by the renewing of our minds, or by an *in-*
ward change, as a foundation for a new and
Christian life.

In the prosecution of these words I would,

- I. Set before you what we are called to in the text.
- II. The grounds and foundation of the requirement.
- III. Offer you my assistance for the improvement of it.

I. I would set before you what we are called to in the text ; or what is *required* of us, when we are bid to *rejoice in hope*.

That state in which, through the unmerited grace or favour of God, we stand as
B 2 Christians,

SERM. Christians, is in general a state of hope. It

I. *belongs* to our calling : we are *invited* thereto
 as we are invited to Christianity, or called to embrace the faith of Christ. Eph. i. 18. God our father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have manifested their love in giving us abundant consolation and good hope, through grace, or through pure favour. 2 Thess. ii. 16. By the gospel, hope is preached to every creature under heaven, to which it reaches ; as it is an offer of divine grace and favour, which all mankind are *invited* to accept *without distinction*. This is the *general* blessing that Christ hath purchased ; and which God hath vouchsafed us through him. *We are saved by hope* ; Rom. viii. 24. that is, religion, or the life of God in the soul, is produced and maintained thereby. The soul, from the first beginnings, and through all the stages of that life, is greatly influenced by that principle. Without it religion could never commence, and unless it be cherished, religion must quickly die. It is one of its very vitals : the grand instrument that suggests all the powerful motives to it ; the great spring of action in the divine life ; and that which must *abide* with us through our whole course, in order to safety, comfort, and victory. 1 Cor. xiii. 13. And there is nothing more evident, than
 that

that it is one of the principal *ends* of the gos- SERM.
pel to encourage and promote this grace in I.
us, from the objects it reveals, and the pro-
mises that it gives. Amongst others, is that
of “ an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled,
“ and that fadeth not away, reserved in hea-
“ ven for us.” This is stiled by way of em-
phasis, *the* promise of God ; and consequent-
ly this is *the* hope of the Christian. 1 John
ii. 25. and in this manner, even as the *chief*,
the *ultimate* object of the Christian’s hope,
doth the gospel represent it. Col. i. 5. Tit.
i. 2.

The words of the text are so general, that it
is not certain whether *the hope* mentioned in it,
respect the *general* circumstance we are intro-
duced into by the gospel ; or whether it re-
spect the *particular* object of the *divine glory*,
in the hope of which the Christian is declar-
ed to be allowed and justified in his rejoy-
cing. Rom. v. 2. But this creates no manner
of difficulty ; nor makes the least alteration
be it the one or the other ; since that *state*
of hope into which we are brought, receives
its value *from* that *eternal life*, which we
have the expectation of ; and since it is that
life, which is the great end and design of
that state of favour and grace, in which, as
Christians we now stand ; it is to bring us to

SERM. glory. So that, indeed, they depend one upon

I. another; they run one into another. And
 from thence the precept in the text may be
 understood as a general injunction, “duly and
 “suitably to rejoice in all the glorious expect-
 “tations, that we have as Christians, from
 “the declarations, promises, and assurances
 “of the gospel; more especially in the
 “great promise and chief object of hope,
 “eternal life.

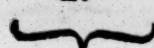
It may at first sight appear strange, that
 this should be the matter of a *precept*: *rejoice*
in hope. Why, who would not? Can there
 be any *reluctancy* or *opposition* in the mind of
 man to *hope* or *joy*, when both of them are
 what it so naturally seeks, and indulges itself
 in? The *requiring* it therefore as a *duty* may
seem needless or absurd. But this we are sure
 it cannot be. It is therefore necessary more
 particularly to consider its import; or what
 is *required*, when we are *bid* to *rejoice in hope*.
 And, I think, there are three things included
 in this precept, which are very justly the
 matter of a *command*: viz. That we take
 care to get into such a state, wherein we may
warrantably indulge comfortable expectations.
 That we so attend to the glorious objects of
 our hope, which in the gospel are set before
 us, as to derive the joy from them, they are
designed

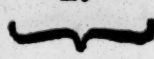
designed to yield. And that by a growing esta- SERM.
blishment and encrease of our *hopes*, we en- I.
deavour to *improve* our *joy*. I would a little
open these particulars by some enlargement
upon them.

I. When we are *required* to rejoice in hope,
we are required to *get* into such a state, where-
in we may *warrantably* indulge comfortable
expectations.

No one who thinks at all, who knows any
thing of the gospel, can suppose that this
inspired Apostle is calling upon *every* one to
whom the gospel comes, to rejoice in *the hope*
of future blessedness ; or that he is encour-
aging all promiscuously to *work up themselves*
to this by *any way* that they can. Certainly
he had no such design. This would be
confounding the distinction, which runs
through the gospel, between the righteous
and the wicked ; and making *presumption* and
hope, *one* and the *same* thing. It cannot be
imagined, that he is here granting a licence
to such who are earthly, sensual, or devilish,
who in their minds are enemies to God, and
strangers to heaven, *without any more to do*,
to rejoice or solace themselves in the favour
of God, or in a title to eternal blessedness.
No : it is certain that he either *supposed*, that
those he wrote to were *actually* in a state of

SERM. favour with God, and *actually* entitled to

I.  heaven by the promise of God, from their holiness and obedience; or that they should immediately *get* into such a state, wherein they could upon *good* grounds indulge so joyful an hope. In being called to the *end*, we are at the same time called to the *means*; as the means are always supposed to be included in the end. This is a sure rule in the interpretation of divine laws; when we are commanded to be holy, we are at the same time, and by the same precept, commanded to pray, and to attend to all the *instituted means* of holiness. In like manner, am I *bid* and *required* to hope for the glory of God? Why certainly it is thereby required, that I *become such a one*, as may *justly* and *warrantably* do it. Is it an expectation *allowed* and *encouraged* by the gospel, that I shall see God, the supreme good, and be happy in body and soul to eternity? And is there not a *call* and *command* *included herein*, that I *qualify* myself for it, according to the terms and requirements which the gospel hath laid down, that I *purify* myself, as God is pure, and become *meet* for, and suited to, such a state of enjoyment. 1 John iii. 2, 3. Col. i. 12. Is this the Christian's *hope*? But would it not be absolute *presumption*, should he cherish it, *whilst*

whilst according to the gospel constitution he SERM.
hath no claim to it, nay is absolutely ex- I.
cluded from it? When we are called to hope, 
or to a comfortable expectation of what the
gospel promises; *that faith* and *that obedience*
is at the same time demanded, which such
an expectation is made to rest upon, and by
which only it will ever be fulfilled. It is a
Christian hope that is here specified; and that
only is so, which is according to the tenor of
the *promise*; for upon *that* all *genuine* hope
must be grounded. In being called then to
this expectation of good, we are called to *see*
to it, that we are in that state to which only
such expectations *belong*; or that we are enti-
tled by the gospel of Christ, from the suit-
ableness of our spirit and temper, to the na-
ture of the blessedness, to admit and cherish
the expectation of it.

2. In being commanded to rejoice in hope,
we are required so to *attend* to the great
objects of it set before us, as to derive the joy
from them that they are designed to yield.

The chief objects, which, as *Christians*, we
are commanded and inclined to look for, are
out of sight. 2 Cor. iv. 18. "We look, not at
the things which are seen, but at the things
that are not seen:" that is, those which *a-*
bove all others, we Christians make the ob-
jects

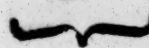
SERM. jects of our attention and concern, those

I. which principally influence us, are out of sight. And it is these that *hope* respects ; for as the Apostle saith, what we see and possess can never be the object of our *hope* ; that must be something *not seen* and future. But these being assured to us by a *divine* testimony, we may have as *satisfying* a persuasion of them, as of things we *behold*. By this faith in them, or the persuasion of the mind concerning them, what is invisible may influence us, as if it was visible, and what is future, as if present. Though they are future and unseen, they may hereby become as great realities with us, as if they were the objects of sense. From hence we are able to rejoice in hope, or to anticipate our enjoyment of them. But this can never be done by a general and loose assent thereto. It requires that *firm* and *full* persuasion of their truth, as shall produce an *habitual* attention to them. Is it then my duty as a Christian to rejoice in hope of future blessedness ? It is at the same time made my duty to get the clearest and fullest apprehensions of it, according to the gospel discoveries of it ; to live much in contemplation of it ; to draw aside the veil, and to bring it down to the view of the mind : to set it before me, and frequently to converse therewith. For it

is

is by this means, that I am to experience that SERM.
 inward joy and pleasure, which the hope I.
 thereof will excite. It is by the *near view* that
 meditation and thought alone can give, that
 we can *know* the happiness we hope for; that
 we can be *sensible* of the abundant recompence
 made us, for all the labours and self-denials
 called for in order to attain it; and *obtain* the
 lively satisfying persuasion of the vast over-
 balance of an eternal weight of glory, both
 to the afflictions and enjoyments of this world.
 Rom. viii. 18. The *joy* and *pleasure* of hope
 immediately arises from the *excellency* of what
 is hoped for; and the object is delineated and
 displayed in the gospel on *purpose* to produce
 that joy. But as the object is *future*, how
 can it thus influence the mind, but by con-
 templation, by a serious application of the
 thoughts to the glorious theme? The most
 excellent and the most contemptible objects
 are *alike* as to influence, whilst we mind them
 not. In consequence, therefore, of its being
 the character and duty of the Christian to re-
 joice in hope, let us more frequently abstract
 our minds from, and shut our eyes designedly
 upon, a present world, that we may more in-
 tensely fix them on another: and by delibe-
 rate attention to the great realities of the
 everlasting state, may we endeavour to enjoy
 the

SERM. the complacential relishes of it. We shall

I.  then find that it is qualified to inspire a joy, that will more than balance the pleasures of sense; and prove a powerful dissuasive against the allurements to a sinful life, or to what would be the *loss* of our hope, and of the joy resulting from it.

3. In being required to rejoice in hope, it is plainly our duty, by a growing *establishment* of our *hope*, to endeavour the *improving* of our *joy*.

As the *joy* here spoken of is what *hope* inspires, it is plainly supposed, that it will be in *proportion* thereto. This then is a plain call upon us, for such a *settled confirmed* expectation, as may produce a *sensible* satisfaction. Now which way doth the Christian arrive at any *hope* of the divine favour and eternal life? Is it not by the introduction of new and holy qualities, in *opposition* to the sinful disorders which more or less prevailed, through the bias of depraved nature and sinful custom? Evidencing themselves by the prevailing direction of the will and affections, to God, holiness, and heaven; to God as the chief object of the heart; to holiness as the way to please and enjoy God; and to heaven as a sufficient recompence, and as the ultimate end. Is not the Christian's hope *grounded* upon his conformity

conformity, in spirit and practice, to the gospel SERM.
of Christ, in his participation of a divine na- I.
ture, and in his resemblance of his master in
mind and life? When we are required then to
aim at such an hope as will produce a joy, it
is plain we are thereby required to *raise* and
establish our comfortable expectations: since
the *better grounded* they are, the nearer will
the impressions they leave upon the mind *a-*
mount to a joy. We are therefore, Christians,
in *duty bound* to endeavour the removal of
every thing that would darken our evidences,
that would enfeeble our hopes, that would
minister to doubt and uncertainty; and to at-
tain to a *satisfaction* as to futurity. We should
give all diligence to make our calling and
election *sure*; by our *abounding* in the several
graces and virtues of the Christian's mind and
life; that we may have the prospect not only
of a *probable*, but a *certain*, or an *abundant*
entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our
Lord and Saviour. 2 Pet. i. 10, 11. We should
labour to *establish* ourselves in the love of God,
to have the *assuring* testimony of conscience
with respect to our sincerity, in order to our
triumphing in hope of the glory of God. Rom.
v. 2. Not resting in any *present* attainments,
nor with the degree of hope that they will
minister, we should be pressing forwards to-
wards

SERM. wards that maturity and strength of grace,
 I. that *habitual* piety and virtue, as will produce
 an *assurance* of hope, which hope will inspire
 a *fulness* of joy. To that *exalted* holiness should
 Christians aspire, which is accompanied with
 a *joyful* hope. It is only upon our holiness,
 that any hope of eternal life can be grounded;
 it is only upon our *abounding* in all the fruits of
 righteousness, that our hope can *abound*; and
 it is only by the *advancement* of our *hope*, that
 our *joy* can ever *rise*.

This may suffice for the first thing: which
 was to shew, what is enjoined us in the pre-
 cept of our rejoicing in hope, as it is a Christ-
 ian *duty*, in which light it plainly stands in
 the text. I proceed now to the second ge-
 neral head.

II. The grounds and foundation of the re-
 quirement.

Though it is not a *common case* amongst
 Christians, it is a very *reasonable demand*, and
might be a more general blessing. There is
 enough to justify and support it. All the di-
 vine precepts will bear the scrutiny of reason,
 even those which carry duty to the greatest
 height. There is a full-sufficiency in the
 means provided, to animate our endeavours
 after the perfection, which the precept pre-
 scribes. This is not the *common*, though it is the
prescribed,

prescribed, hope of the Christian. But let us SERM.
look a little into the *grounds* and *reasons* of it, I.
and we shall see whether this precept is *beyond*
our capacity, or whether we do not live, for
comfort and satisfaction, much *beneath* our-
selves.

1. Let us consider the *chief* object of the
Christian's expectations.

God hath made many declarations and dis-
coveries for the raising and supporting of our
hope, in his exceeding great and precious pro-
mises : an assured interest in which, from our
being such to whom they are made, is a suffi-
cient ground for a manly triumph. But there
is *one* that stands distinguished from the rest,
as the *ultimate* and *central* object of our hope,
stiled in the Gospel, eternal life. Of this we
have not a *full* account at present. It doth
not *yet* appear what we *shall* be : very proba-
bly, from our *inability* of forming any *just*
conceptions of many articles of that blessed-
ness, whilst we are in the body. We must
be *actually* blessed, and have our capacities *en-
larged*, before we can know what it is. But
something we know at present, even so much
of its general nature, as to be a reward wor-
thy of a God to bestow, and sufficient to raise
the Christian's hope and joy to rapture and ec-
stasy. And what is it, that he doth know of
the

SERM. the object of his expectation? Why thus

I. much. “ That, with perfected faculties, he
 “ shall see and enjoy the Supreme Good, the
 “ Fountain of light and life; as manifesting
 “ himself in the splendor of his perfections,
 “ and in the testimonies of his love. He
 “ shall see his Redeemer face to face, and be
 “ where he is; he whom unseen he loved,
 “ and who hath loved him much more. He
 “ shall be united in friendship with the noblest
 “ order of Beings in the creation of God;
 “ mingle with the happy spirits that surround
 “ the throne, in their praises and services to
 “ God and the Lamb; join a numberless
 “ multitude, perfect in kind, one in mind,
 “ affection, and end, triumphing in *their*
 “ and in his own conquest over sin, death,
 “ and hell, through the influence of divine
 “ grace, and the blood of the Lamb. A society
 “ cemented by the purest and most fervent
 “ love; each one, from resemblance and hap-
 “ piness, the children and favourites of the
 “ great King. The Christian expects to be de-
 “ livered from every fear, grief, and tempta-
 “ tion; to be put into the possession of every
 “ thing necessary to a compleat felicity. He
 “ shall see light in God’s own light: he shall
 “ be *assured* of the divine love to him from
 “ his own *experience*: and be employed in
 “ acts

“ acts of love to God, the most sublime, with SERM.
 “ perfect freedom and constancy : *ages* of this I.
 “ happiness lying before him ; and his *prospect*
 “ stretching to an *unmeasurable length*.” This,
 this, is the Christian’s *hope* : And infinitely pre-
 ferable it is to the *possession* of a *world, like this*.
 With this Canaan in view he may travel cheer-
 fully through the wilderness, amidst all the
 thorns and briars that here infest him ; and
 with the greatest reason may rejoice and tri-
 umph under the clear and full expectation
 thereof, since he can enjoy no more till this
 hope, as it shall, becomes fruition. For,

2. It is accompanied with the greatest *cer-
 tainty*.

The great disproportion of our capacities,
 desires, and reaches to all in *this* world, is a
 natural and strong intimation of *another* life ;
 and that our Maker hath provided *something*,
adequate and *answerable* thereto, hereafter to
 be experienced, and enjoyed. But the Gospel
 hath raised this feeble hope into an assurance,
 to all those who believe and embrace it. The
 promise itself runs through the Gospel in great
 variety of expression, in order to ascertain and
 describe the thing. That God is *true*, none,
 that know what they say, can question : and
 the Christian’s hope of eternal life is grounded
 on the promise of God, *who cannot lye*. Tit. i. 2.

SERM. Nor can there be any more reason to question

I. whether he can answer what he hath engaged for, be it ever so much beyond what in this state of darkness and imperfection we are acquainted with, or have any conception of. On the contrary, we may be *fully persuaded* that what he hath promised he is *able* to perform. Rom. iv. 21. The Christian therefore can answer it to *himself*, that he indulges such transcendent glorious expectations, since he is called to it by God, as to the *common* hope of those of his character. Eph. iv. 4. We can no more doubt therefore of the reality of this eternal life as described to us in its incomparable excellency, than we can doubt of the truth of the Gospel. Of *that* we are as certain, as we can be of the resurrection of Christ; and of *that* we can no more reasonably doubt, than of any of those things we most firmly believe, of which we were not eye-witnesses. The Christian's grand expectation is so secure with respect to the *reality*, as well as transcendency of its object, that it will *bear a triumph*. It is not a *conjecture*, but a *certainty*. It is actually laid up and in reserve, and shall be manifested in due time: he shall never be ashamed of it from a disappointment. This hope therefore *may* be a confidence, and justify a joy. It hath the best supports,

supports, even the power and promise of God; SERM.
and is as great a reality, as the resurrection of I.
our Lord from the dead is a *truth*. 

3. The security that the Christian hath for the obtaining this his hope, through divine assistance, is another ground for his present joy.

There is nothing in which mankind surely are more agreed, as there is nothing that their experience would more fully satisfy them of, if attended to, than the need they have of divine aids. And I believe it will be always found true, that in proportion to the heart's being *set* upon and *directed* to the attainment of eternal life, the desire and dependence of the soul, with respect to *divine influences*, hath been more ardent and explicit. Were we to pursue immortal glory by the mere strength of our own powers, unassisted by God, through the many present sollicitations of sin and sense, under the present disorders and ascendancy of the animal over the rational part, I confess, I see not how hope could ever rise to any thing *like a joy*. But the case is much otherwise: there are many promises, and encouragements in another form, respecting divine assistance; not only to engage to, but to *animate* in, the pursuit of the glorious distant object. Of this the Christian is assured: and, his own hearty concurrence being supposed, he may promise it
C 2 himself

SERM. himself in a degree that shall secure the event.

I. He works *with* God, as he is working *for* heaven. The grand design of God in all his dispensations with mankind, is to put them *into the way* of attaining the perfection and felicity of their nature. He well knows and considers our weakneses and infirmities, and our inability from thence, joined with the many flatteries, amusements, and diversions from the world, to secure this end. From hence, as a father, he is *ready* with *his aid*; and they who by watchfulness and prayer, testify the sense of their need thereof, and their sollicitude about their ultimate end, are warranted to look for it, in proportion to internal or external necessities. How much then is there to enable and prompt the Christian, to *rejoice* in hope of future blessedness! in that he hath one with him to preserve and strengthen him; through whom he may chearfully expect he shall receive the end of his faith, patience, and of every other grace, he is called to exercise, even the salvation of his soul. The grace assured to him being *all-sufficient*, the display of it being *when*, and as he needs it, and the *end*, for which it is imparted being the good pleasure of the divine goodness, the Christian may conclude, whilst he is faithful, that he who hath begotten him

to

to a lively hope, will bring him to enjoyment. SERM.
2 Cor. xii. 9. I.

For these reasons may we be justly required to *rejoice* in hope; since, where it is well founded, there is such provision made for the raising it to this perfection, life, and strength. Its foundations are immutable, and never can fail.

I shall close at present by one inference; that is this,

A religious life is unspeakably the wisest and the happiest of all others: eminently so, for this reason, amongst many others, because it is the only life that hath any hope, comparatively, or deserving of the name, belonging to it.

It introduces its votaries into a state of comfortable expectation. And are we not sufficiently acquainted with the torturing power of fear and despair, to judge of the comforts of hope, or to determine of the wide difference of the two states, so as to make a wise choice? Such a desirable state of mind is not *accidental* to religion; but its *genuine* result and consequence. It flows from the *very nature* of the thing; it is warranted by God; intended as the present reward of the righteous; and a presage of full enjoyment. *Nature leads* us to hope, as the general object of it is *good* and

SERM. *happiness*. But *religion* carries the matter *much*

I. *further*; it *justifies* us therein; it gives a *sanc-*
tion to the most *liberal* expectations of good,
 from the fountain of goodness, the Almighty,
 the All-sufficient God. It interests its votaries
 in a divine Providence, which is infinitely more
 concerned in present events, both desirable
 and dreadful, than *all other* causes or agents
put together. It equally assures to such, the
 most cheering expectations as to *hereafter*,
 from the giver of eternal life, and the arbiter
 of their everlasting doom.

Permit me then to ground an earnest exhortation upon this, for a *general embracing* of religion, and the *following* it in *good earnest*, where it is professed. Is not this a very weighty motive thereto, that it introduces us into a state of hope towards God and eternity, in proportion to its prevalency? Christians, if we were to study what to chuse, and might have it for chusing, wherein could we more evidence the highest self-love, than in this choice? "To have an heart *full of hope* as to " life, death, and eternity; and a *divine promise* for its *ground and security*." This religion *pretends* to; this it would *answer*. How supporting is it to *know*, that the divine ear is open to our present cries; that the divine wisdom interests itself in our present lot: and what-

whatever is a *real* blessing the divine goodness SERM.
 will *suitably* and *seasonably* communicate? Our I.
 great business is to be happy: which way shall {
 we become so? We have not at any time
 enough *in hand* to make us so. *Expectation*
 must enter into our felicity, *whether we will or*
no: the mind is *always reaching forward* to
 futurity. Can expectation of *evil* make us
 happy? *That* is the natural consequence and
 portion of *vice*. But I believe you will agree
 with me, that it *must* be *hope*, or an expecta-
 tion of *good*, that must produce *happiness*: and
this is *only* the companion and reward of *reli-*
gion. The soul, *destitute* of religious hope,
 dares not look *so far* as a grave: whilst one
 one of the greatest pleasures of life must be
 to have a *cheering* prospect *beyond it*. *This* the
 soul inspired and influenced by religion hath:
 it extends its views *out of choice*; and finds a
 very *sensible* satisfaction from the most awful
 futurity. From a world of *realities*, it derives
 a reality to its own pleasures, which no other
 knows; from a world of *light*, a brightness
 is reflected upon its gloomy path, and even in
 the shades of death; from a world of *love*,
 of which it lives in the prospect, it keeps up
its own to a delightful height.

But *most* sensibly is the power of hope felt
 by the *dying* person. We are, Christians, un-

SERM. der a *sentence* of mortality : and consequently

I. we have before us a languishing or pained body, and a solemnity of circumstances altogether *new*. We shall find a vast difference between our *apprehensions* of things in the hours of perfect health and vivacity amidst the hurries and amusements of the world ; and *those* under the arrest of sickness, under an order from heaven to retire to our beds, and in the view of a separation. The hope that may serve us, or with which we may put ourselves off, in the *former* circumstance, will by no means be sufficient under the *latter*. The time *will* come, and may overtake us *suddenly*, when we shall have nothing *but hope* left us to minister any consolation ; and when none but what is *well grounded* will keep off the most *distressing fears*. All *expectations* of good *from* this world, and all *enjoyment* of good *in it*, *will shortly*, and *may hourly*, cease ; and no enjoyment, no expectation of good, remain ; but what is derived from another world. The *foundation* of all such must *now* be laid, from whence any satisfaction can result ; and that can only be done by the practice of religion and righteousness. An hope thus founded, sets death in a view that destroys the terrors of it ; and renders it a change greatly to be desired. That *night* of the wicked is the *day* of

of the righteous. Whilst the wicked are *driven* SERM
away in their wickedness by death, the righte- I.
ous, from the prevalency of hope, goeth away
with his *own consent*. Prov. xiv. 32. *Allured* by
the joyful *prospect*, the soul springs forward to-
wards the object of its satisfaction. Thus as it
rejoices in hope *all its way*, it *eminently* doth so
at last: the nearer it comes to eternity, the nearer
is it to the full accomplishment of it.

What a vanity is our existence ! how imagi-
nary our prospects ! What a trifle is our enjoy-
ment in this world, *abstracted* from those of a bet-
ter ! Let us possess what we will, if our views as
to God and *another* world are not comfortable,
we must want our chief satisfaction in *this*. From
all this may we be induced so to act, as to ren-
der God our friend, a living hope our *habitual*
state. Thus may we lay in for *every future*
event with which we have a concern ; and for
joy under the most important. If we can rejoice
in hope, we shall find it more easy to be pa-
tient under tribulation, yea to triumph over our
last enemy. To conclude with the words of
the Apostle ; may the God of hope fill us with
all joy and peace in believing, that we may
more and more abound in hope, through the
power of the Holy Ghost ; whilst we are giving
all diligence ourselves in order to the *full assur-*
ance of hope even unto the end.

S E R M O N



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SERMON II.



On the same SUBJECT.



ROMANS xii. 12.

Rejoicing in hope.

I HAVE considered these words, as an *es-* SERM.
sential article of a truly happy mind. Since II.
 we are so circumstanced and constituted that
 our views of futurity have a very considerable
 influence upon our present felicity, so we must
 be able *to rejoice in hope*, or *in our prospects* as
 to an *hereafter*, if we would attain to any *sta-*
ble satisfaction, or *real* self-enjoyment. This
 I have endeavoured to prove—But there is an-
 other view in which I have proposed to consider
 the

SERM. the words; that in which they were delivered

II. by the Apostle. And they stand here, in the
 form of a *precept*, as one amongst many other
duties, incumbent on the Christian; as the *evidence*
 as well as the privilege of our having
 given up ourselves to God, and of our being
 transformed by the renewing of our minds, or
 by an inward and thorough change, as the
 foundation of a Christian deportment. Here I
 proposed,

I. To set before you what is required in the
 text. And it may be read as a *general injunction*,
 “duly and suitably to rejoice in all the
 “gracious grants and glorious expectations
 “which we have, as Christians, from the de-
 “clarations, promises, and assurances of the
 “Gospel, more especially in the *great* promise,
 “in the *chief* object of hope, eternal life.” But
 more particularly I told you three things might
 be included in this precept, viz. That we take
 care to *get into* such a state, wherein we may
warrantably indulge comfortable expectations--
 That we so *attend* to the glorious objects of our
 hope, which are set before us in the Gospel,
 as to derive the joy from them which they are
 designed to yield—And that by a growing *estab-*
lishment and *encrease* of our hopes, we endea-
 vour to improve our joy.

The

The *second* thing I proposed was, To consider SERM.
the grounds and foundation of the requirement. II.

Though it is not a *common case* amongst Christians, it is a very *reasonable demand*. There is *enough* to justify and support it. This will appear if we consider the *chief object* of the Christian's expectation, stiled in the Gospel, eternal life. Of this I gave you a summary view, according to the revelation made of it by the Gospel; though, at the same time, we are assured there is much more within the veil than is manifested at present; a glorious inconceivable remainder reserved for the discovery of *enjoyment*—The grounds of this joyful hope will also appear very great, when we consider the certainty that attends it from the power and promise of God—and also—The security that the Christian hath for the obtaining this his hope, through the assistance he is strongly encouraged to supplicate, and from his improvement of it confidently to expect from above, in all needful measures, under all his own infirmities, and the snares and dangers of his trial state.

These being enlarged on, I entered upon the application of the subject. I could mention but one Inference, which was this—a religious life must be unspeakably the wisest and happiest of all others: *eminently* so for this reason

SERM. reason amidst many more, "because it is the
 II. " *only* life that hath *any* hope, comparatively,
 " or any, deserving the name, *belonging* to it."

I now proceed to a

2d Inf. The Gospel is a very great treasure, and merits our hearty and most grateful acceptance; for the *distinguishing* advantage we thereby receive, with respect to our *hope towards God*, and a *future state of blessedness*.

The Apostle affirms of the *heathens*, that they were *without hope*. Eph. ii. 12. Which, at first sight, seems to declare, they had no ground at all for it; and were entire strangers to the exercise of it as to *all* spiritual and eternal blessings. But it is certain it is not thus *absolutely* to be understood. The very *natural* notion of a God, or what unassisted reason suggests, includes *goodness*. *This* then must have been taken into the conception which *they* had formed of him—Without *this* apprehension of a Deity, and consequently without *some degree* of hope in him, there could have been *no* act of religion towards him; which it is certain there was in various forms: for, according to the Apostle's to the Hebrews general declaration, he that cometh to God, be he who he will, must believe not only *that he is*, but *that he is a rewarder* of them who diligently seek him. Heb. ii. 6. Without a faith
 in

in these two articles, he very strongly intimates SERM.
there could be no worship from any : All reli- II.
gion is founded upon the belief of a divine ex- ~
istence ; and upon an *expectation of good* in re-
turn to homage and worship. When the hea-
thens then are described in the forecited place
as *without hope*, it must be understood *compara-*
tively ; they had not *that* which the *Jews*
had, resulting from a *covenant of promise* :
theirs was not grounded upon any *express pro-*
mise of favour and good : so those words stand
connected. As for *thy hope*, O Christian, it
is not only beyond that of heathens, but of the
Jews too, under the Old Testament dispensa-
tion. *Thine* is carried to a much greater height.
Thy state in general is justly described and
distinguished thereby, from the many *express* de-
clarations, and *plenty* of spiritual *promises*, re-
specting present and future good things, which
depended on the free grace and mercy of God,
and which therefore could not be expected
with any degree of certainty, *but upon a reve-*
lation of such grace and favour. The only
foundation on which the mind can *assuredly*
rest and stay itself in such matters, is a *cove-*
nant of promise. This the Gospel is in its whole
tenor and design. It is therefore with great
reason, that the Apostle Peter presses those to
whom he wrote, to exercise and indulge the
fullest

SERM. fullest and firmest hope, upon the account of
 II. the grace that was brought to them by the re-
 velation of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. i. 13. We
 are unspeakably indebted to the Gospel of
 Christ, for the *assurance* we have respecting those
 things that are at the *foundation* of our com-
 fortable prospects, in respect of the favour of
 God, the *extent* of his free grace in the remis-
 sion of our sins, and the reversing of the pe-
 nalties which sin and transgression had justly
 deserved. To the Gospel we owe it, that the
 future events *themselves*, with which we have
 the highest concern, and an indispensable in-
 terest, may be beheld in a light, ministering
 abundantly to a *joyful hope*. For thereby *we*
know that death is a conquered enemy; that it
 shall surrender its prisoners: that there shall be
 a resurrection of the body, a redemption of
 it from the corruption and dishonours of the
 grave; and, if it be not our own fault, a re-
 union of it with the soul, infinitely to the ad-
 vantage and happiness *of both*. So that *now*,
 we Christians, may *resign* our own corruptible
 bodies, and those of our friends to the rest of
 the grave, with the assured prospect of a re-
 storation, with an unspeakable *improvement* of
 circumstances, and *advancement* of condition.
 Of *this* hope the Apostle declares *they* were
 destitute, who were unacquainted with reve-
 lation.

lation. I Theff. iv. 13. As to *eternal life*, SERM. II.
 that great promise of the Gospel, this being the gift of God's unmerited favour, our hope of it could never have risen to the *certainty* that it *now* doth, but by the assurances and declarations of the Gospel. Whatever reason *unassisted*, might in *general* dictate or conjecture as to the future reward of the righteous; it could never have been contemplated as *we* can do it, even as a *sure* and *purchased* inheritance, which peculiarly feeds and raises our hopes. Revelation *only* could *settle* that upon any *solid* foundation, so as to deliver the human mind from perplexity and doubt. But this *is* done, in that which *we* are blessed with, by Jesus Christ. Nor have we only the *prospect* of that glorious recompence, but we have also the *way of attaining it*, and *of making it our own*, so *explicitly* laid down, that we are capacitated thereby to rejoice all our way, in the hope of it *as* our own. The Gospel so abounds with *express* declarations of the most concerning truths respecting futurity, some of which no principles of reason could *discover*, much less *ascertain* to us; it so clears and brightens our prospects, where doubt and fear were most *apt* to prevail, and where they were most tormenting, from the importance of the consequences, that it may be said to *introduce* us

SERM. into a state of hope ; and consequently to merit our acceptance, and adherence to it, if we

II.  have any sense of the worth of inward satisfaction, and comfortable expectation. What recommendation can any dispensation come attended with, that hath an *equal* influence upon the minds of sinful creatures, designed for immortality, as the advancement and establishment of *hope* with respect to the favour of God, and a covenant-title to a *glorious* immortality ? This is the prerogative of the Gospel. In this it triumphs over every thing else : infomuch that whoever *renounces* the Gospel, and at the same time pretends to *equal* the Christian in point of *hope*, either basely disclaims what he is indebted to for his hope, or it must be *chiefly* mere presumption and uncertain conjecture. Let this consideration engage us to lay a firm hold upon the Gospel ; and suffer none to wrest it out of our hands, or to divorce us from it, till infidelity can give us something *superior* to the Gospel in respect of peace, hope, and comfortable prospects, either as to objects or certainty. Let us have something *superior* to the Gospel, I say, before we part with it ; for if it is but an *equivalent*, we are as well where we are.

3. Inf. How just and indispensable are the regards, which the gospel demands for the Lord Jesus ?

It was he, who, by the appointment of the SERM.
 father, and by his own voluntary undertaking II.
 of what was expedient as our Saviour, hath
 procured the hopes we enjoy as christians;
 and, in virtue of his death, lives to maintain
 and *accomplish* them. It was in consideration
 of what he did and suffered, that God was
 pleased to establish a covenant of grace with
 fallen mankind, abounding with exceeding
 great and precious *promises*; from whence it is
 that our hopes are capable of rising to an *as-*
surance and joy. This new covenant is found-
 ed in *his* blood. The promises thereof are
 made, and shall be made good, to us, through
him. 2 Cor. i. 20. All his transactions, as our
 mediator, center in this as a *principal* end,
 viz. to raise and establish our comfortable ex-
 pectations, to *enliven* our prospects, yea to
 give a *resurrection* to our hopes, which guilt
 had destroyed. And from hence is *he* stiled
our hope; 1 Tim. i. 1. and the publication of
 the gospel, containing the covenant with the
 promises of grace, which is procured by his
 death, is stiled the bringing in of a *better*
hope. Heb. vii. 19. He *lives* also above to fill
 our hopes with life, to vindicate those that are
 just, to accomplish the highest we can indulge.
 So that through him we may chearfully run
 our christian race, amidst all the toils and
 D 2 difficulties

SERM. difficulties of it, under the animating influence

II. of an eternal glory and blessedness, purchased by that Jesus, who lives to confer it, and who hath *assured* us of this, that he might raise our hopes to a real triumph. Doth the gospel now demand the affection of our hearts, and the obedient regard of our lives *for him*? And is it not with the highest reason? Doth not the purchaser and restorer of our hopes, and of every comfortable prospect, *merit* all we can return? O what would *this world* be without hope! What a miserable creature would *man* be, under a *natural* dread of death, and expectation of an eternal existence after it, but for a brighter prospect on the other side! What can establish an obligation then, if the procuring of this doth not? Or who can merit the title of a benefactor, and claim the gratitude of our hearts, if not *he* who hath *exchanged* the most formidable prospects for the most comfortable ones, and despair itself for a joyful hope?

4. Inf. Religion is no melancholy thing.

How just a foundation doth the text yield for this remark? It is one amongst the many prejudices against religion, that it is an enemy to every thing chearful and comfortable; and more especially that Christianity is so; that upon embracing that, we must surrender every thing

thing else that is the source of real enjoyment. SERM.
 But how unjust a charge, how groundless II.
 a fancy is this ! Is it possible for it to subsist in
 the face of the text, and of many others of the
 same import ? Can it be the christian's *duty* to
 rejoice ; and he at the same time *forbid* it ?
 Can we be encouraged, yea, *commanded*, to
 cherish and exercise the affection of *joy* ; and
 shall our master and rule be represented as
enemies to every thing of that kind ? How shall
 we ever know the *genius* and *spirit* of christi-
 anity, the temper it inspires, or the affections
 it promotes, but from the *precepts* of it ? And
 doth it not *insist* upon the chearfulness and joy
 of its votaries, as *most honourable* and *agreeable*
to itself ? Hath it not abundantly *provided* for
 it in its very scheme, and proposed it as one
 of its distinguishing views, beyond that of
 every other dispensation ? Shall it be said or
 thought, that the christian is *doomed* to an
heartless uncomfortable life, whilst he is *required*
 to *cherish* and *exercise* a *joy* ? Or that he is to
renounce all self-satisfaction, whilst the most
 reviving hopes are provided for his *daily* re-
 past ?

It is a very hard case, and what would be
 exploded as *monstrous* in every other, that reli-
 gion must bear the blame of all the weaknesses
 and unhappiness of natural constitution. It

SERM. may as justly be assigned the cause of *every*
 II. *other bodily* infirmity as that of melancholy.

~ The darkness of the night may as well be ascribed to the sun, as the darkness and clouds of the *mind* to religion. No; it is the *want* of it, or gross *ignorance* or *mistakes* about it, to which such an event is owing. There is nothing in the nature of the thing, nothing in the gospel constitution, that I know of, to *promote* dejection; much less that *requires* it of those who embrace it. The contrary is very apparent: in that its very *foundation* is laid in *hope*, and abundant *provision* is made by the cheering and glorious objects it proposes, and the certainty that accompanies them, for its rising to a *joy*; *intended* for our comfortable walking, inspiring the most delightful affections of the mind, as most perfective of our natures, which is its great *end*; and as an *earnest* and *preparation* of the soul for a state of endless joy and satisfaction, which is its great reward. Christianity is so far from promoting melancholy, or being an enemy to cheerfulness, and true self-enjoyment, that if there are any principles and doctrines taught as belonging thereto, that *naturally* inspire a gloomy and servile spirit in the *true* christian, that distress him, fill him with doubts, fears, anxious suspicions, terrors, or any thing *tending* to despair, he may at once
 pro-

pronounce them to be *false*; that they *belong* SERM.
II.
not to his religion; since they are destructive
of the affection of hope, which he is ever
to maintain, and to do his best to raise to joy
and triumph.

Let not those then who are *friends* to christianity, indulge to any degree of dejection and melancholy, which is so contrary to the temper and genius of their religion: much less let them *place* any religion in it. In proportion to the prevalency of your fear, above your hope, your progress must be retarded; and your master and religion are dishonoured and misrepresented. Nor let any, who, from their unacquaintedness with christianity, may be in danger of impressions from the gloomy representations of some who profess it, take their character of it from the *life*, but go to the *rule*: see what the *gospel itself* requires; what affections it cherishes; what tenor of life it hath provided for. And *then* they would be satisfied it is what is most desirable and comfortable; that it every way contributes to a joyful hope, as an *habitual* disposition; and not only *allows* it as a *privilege*, but hath *required* it as a *duty*. For, so clear, so firm, are the *grounds* of it, that the christian would behave unsuitably to his privileges and character, *not* to re-

SERM. tain his confidence, and the rejoicing of his
 II. hope *firm to the end.*

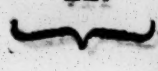
5th. Inf. Though it is the duty of a christian to endeavour the attainment of a joyful hope, yet there is just reason to suspect it, where it is a *sudden* attainment.

I fear some may have *need* of this caution, whilst it may be serviceable to *all*. Rejoicing in hope, may be but another expression for what is generally stiled *assurance*; which is the perfection and confidence of hope, with respect to our own *personal* salvation and happiness. Though probably it seldom rises to that degree, as to be *absolutely* free from doubt or fear, yet where it abundantly *prevails* over every thing of that kind, it is greatly to be suspected, if it is a *sudden* attainment. And the reason is very evident. For, all *regular rational* hope hath a *foundation*. And what is the foundation of a true christian's, but the agreement of his *own* spirit, disposition, and life, with *their* character, to whom the gospel makes the promises of eternal life, or accounts the *heirs* of salvation? Our valid hopes therefore cannot exceed the degree of our piety and virtue: and they must know nothing either of the one or the other, of themselves or of their rule, who imagine themselves to be presently

sently such proficient therein, as to be entitled SERM.
to the *confidence* or *joy* of hope. II.

To be sure, a glowing zeal, fervent prayer, and earnest endeavours persevered in, will be attended with surprising advancement, with which hope may proportionably rise. But this, its consequence, can grow no faster than its ground and cause. All *beyond* or exceeding it, is *presumption*. Our *title* to gospel promises doth not depend upon, or result from our *confidence* or *assurance*; for then it were no matter whether it were presumption or rational hope. It is not our *assurance* of our personal interest itself, I say, that is our *title* to gospel promises, but the *foundation* of it is so, viz. our conformity in spirit and practice to the law of God: our compliance with, and performance of, the conditions upon which the promise is suspended: and by *that* our assurance itself must be tried. Now I think, none, who know any thing of the reality and power of religion, as described in the gospel, or possessing the heart, will say, it is *presently* attained. Surely the prevalency thereof is the product of *much* time and experience, of *continued* watchfulness, and *persevering steady* application. If it be so, the *confidence* and *perfection of hope*, which is founded upon it, cannot be attained sooner. If it is genuine, and warranted by the gospel, it must be the effect
of

SERM. of a *tried* love to God ; of many *conquests*

II.  gained under spiritual conflicts ; of great *fir-
mness* in good principles ; and *rooted habits* of
piety and virtue. I say not this to *discourage*
from the *pursuit* of such an hope ; or to repre-
sent it as unattainable : but only to prevent our
deceiving ourselves, by resting in an *imaginary*
groundless confidence, as what is *suddenly* and
presently attained *must be, instead of that* hope,
that justly ministers a joy ; and which the gos-
pel undertakes to answer and accomplish, in a
final salvation.

6th. Inf. From what hath been said, we
may see, whence it is that comfort and satis-
faction doth no more accompany religion.

It is not because they are inconsistent ; since
rejoicing in hope is *prescribed* and *required* as
belonging to the christian. It is not for want of
means and motives, assistances and encourage-
ments ; for such is the state into which we are
brought by Christ, as to inspire us with hope,
and to make it our *duty* to indulge it ; and
such are the objects presented to us, in which
we are most *nearly* interested, and with which
we are *most* concerned, as to justify and feed a
joy. Whence is it then, that religion and
comfort are so often separated ? or that the
Christian lives no more under the exercises
and sensations of a joyful hope ? There must

be

be a cause ; and when our *religion itself* stands SERM.
so clear of it, it must lie at our own door. II.

Here several things might be mentioned as reasons, arguing great neglect and deficiency on the christian's part. But I would chuse to lay them before you under an exhortation made to all.

That we would *endeavour to rise* to the height of this character and duty of a christian, even to a *joyful hope* as to the favour and acceptance of God, and the rewards of eternal life.

And here I would suggest some things as *means* thereto, whereby we may easily see the great impediments and obstructions, to its being the *ordinary* and *common* experience of the christian. Now, in order to bring you and myself to this happy state, of rejoicing in hope, to which it is our *duty to aspire*.

First, Let us endeavour to establish and strengthen our persuasion of the truth of gospel discoveries ; and particularly of those unseen glories, and future felicity, which it hath brought to light.

Every one that attends must see, that *faith* is *previously* necessary to hope ; it is its very foundation : *that* realizes and presents the object to the mind, though it be invisible ; gives it its being and existence as to its *influence*. For as to every thing in the world, it holds true,

SERM. true, that what is *not believed*, can never affect any of the principles of action, which are hope and fear. But, being once *persuaded* of the truth of any thing, though distant and future, hope or fear is naturally excited, according as the thing is desirable or dreadful. As to the case before us, the thing is very evident. We must be first persuaded of the truth of the declarations and promises of the Gospel, before we can embrace them as good, or as the objects of desire and hope; and the degree of our joy from hope, will only be in proportion to the strength of our faith. In this the Gospel perfectly agrees with reason and experience, in making *our faith* the *principle* of *our joy*. Thus the Apostle, praying for the Romans, declares it to be; "The God of hope fill you with all joy," or with a joyful hope, *in believing*, or by means of your faith. Rom. xv. 13. plainly declaring, that to whatever height their hope was raised by divine influence, yet it was by the immediate influence of their faith; or that an established faith would produce an enlarged joy. In like manner, another Apostle, speaking of those converts to Christianity, who had *not seen* Christ in the flesh, faith, That their *faith* in him was so strong, as enabled them "to rejoice in him" "with a joy unspeakable and glorious." 1 Pet. i. 8. Their minds were so established in the
belief

belief of what the Gospel declared concern- SERM.
ing him, that though he was unseen by them, II.

it produced a joyful hope in him. The same
faith, Christians, *in us*, would produce the
same joy. Our expectations would be more
elevated, were but our faith in an unseen God,
an unseen Saviour, and an invisible world,
more full, strong, and lively. We should en-
deavour to raise it to the Apostle's description,
Heb. ii. 1. that it might be "the substance,
or subsistence, of things hoped for, and the
evidence, or confidence, of things not seen:"
the plain meaning of which is, that our per-
suasion of, and assent to the truth of what the
Gospel declares as to *distant* and *future* objects,
should be as firm and full with respect to their
greatness, *reality* and *certainly*, as if we had
the evidence of sense, or as we *find it to be* in
respect of *sensible* objects. And to this, the *evi-*
dences accompanying them, were they but at-
tended to and frequently revived, accompa-
nied with a fervent application to Heaven,
might raise our faith, which would also in pro-
portion raise our hope to joy.

Again. To that end, let us endeavour to
get the *clearest* and most *lively apprehensions* of
the glorious objects of our hope, and frequently
converse therewith.

It is for want of this that our expectations
are so languid; and that consequently we *feel*

no

SERM. no more from them ; and that a comfortable
 II. prospect as to the things of *time* and *sense* doth
 too often *more* swell our hopes and rejoice our
 hearts, than the expectation of the heavenly
 felicity. The reason is, our *apprehensions* of it
 are not clear or full enough to discern its tran-
 scendent excellency ; or else we seldom or ne-
 ver revive and converse with our own concep-
 tions of it. We rest in some *general confused*
 notion, from whence we can experience but
little power or pleasure. Or if it be some-
 what *distinct* or *clear*, we seldom *advert* to it ;
 or make it the subject of our particular *con-*
templation. From hence there is not enough in
 the object to awaken or fill our hopes. “ He
 “ that is *born heir* (as * one saith) to great
 “ honours and possessions, though he be at a
 “ great uncertainty as to the enjoyment of
 “ them, yet, when he comes to *understand*
 “ what he hath to expect, to *know* what he
 “ is heir to, what grandeur doth he put on?
 “ How do his hopes, rising with his prospect,
 “ form his spirit and deportment? But is it
 “ proportionably so *with us* as to our expec-
 “ tation of the eternal fruition of God in
 “ glory? Do our hopes of that fill our hearts
 “ with joy, our mouths with praise, and cloath
 “ our faces with a chearful aspect?” The an-

* Howe's Blessedness of the Righteous, p. 443.

swer to this must be returned, with respect to SERM.
too many, in the negative. But this is greatly II.
owing to our *unacquaintedness* with what as
christians we expect, and through our own
negligence and indifferency too. Our heavenly
Father hath *told us*, what as his children we
are heirs to, on purpose to fill our hearts with
hope and triumph. He hath been very libe-
ral in his discoveries, though much, through
the *transcendency* of the object, and the narrow-
ness of our minds, is within the veil, surpas-
sing our power of conception. If we then
would feel its inspiring influence upon heart
and hope, let us become familiar with what
God hath revealed concerning it; making that
the measure and guide of our apprehensions of
it; endeavouring they may be as clear and full
as God's revelation will warrant; having got
the lovely image in our minds, let us frequent-
ly converse with it. This would not only ex-
cite the noblest thirst, but *hope* too, that could
fill the human breast, even that of immortal
glory and honour. It would make a joy to arise
and supply us with renewed triumph. Had
we a *clear* and *full* conception of it, though we
looked on it as a *mere representation* of a
state in general, we could not, as men, but
ardently *wish* to possess it. But when, under
the *distinct* and *lively* apprehension of it, we
can also look upon it as a *promised* good, as
an

SERM. an *expected* inheritance, which the Christian
 II. may do, how would it fill the mind with triumph, and inspire it with all the raptures and joys that could ever accompany hope! But this will be still enhanced by another thing that I would suggest, viz.

Let us clear and settle our *own title* and *claim* to the blessedness, that we as Christians expect, and most *warily maintain* it.

The general and universal *offer* that is made thereof is a very considerable ground of hope to *all*. But still there is something much more delightful and satisfactory: that is, when we can not only look upon ourselves as *candidates*, but as *heirs* too. And the more evident this is, doubtless the greater satisfaction must it minister. The *joys* of hope must rise as our *title* to the objects of it *appears*: and when we have attained to an *assurance* of hope in *that* respect, they are at as high a pitch as they can be on this side enjoyment. This assurance is attainable: for by it I mean, “such an evidence of our claim and title to eternal life, “as yields a satisfaction greatly prevailing over “every transient, occasional jealousy of the “contrary.” Now I say, if we would be able to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, our state and character should be thus far *settled*.

Let us resolve to come to a point; *once* to be able to *ascertain* our claim and title, by
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our conformity in spirit and practice to the *de-* SERM.
clared heirs of promise. This indeed, from II.
the imperfections remaining in the most per-
fect, and the corruptions that are in the world,
is liable to a *change*. Our title is subject to
contracted flaws; and to become suspected by
our own consciences: but still it may be *re-*
newed and *cleared up*, which we should *speedily*
do upon every ground of question that we dis-
cern. Should we fall through the power of
temptation, and in an unguarded hour, let us
immediately, by deep humiliation and amend-
ment, recover ourselves to our former state,
which, through the grace of the gospel and
divine influence, we may do. If there should
be any cloud arise upon the mind to eclipse our
hopes, or darken our apprehensions, search out
the cause. If we are not able to *assign* one
from any act which the gospel pronounces an
impeachment of our title, we may be sure it is
from *disorder of body*. In this case, let us al-
ways remember, "that our state towards God
"and heaven change not with our apprehen-
"sions of it." If there be an appearing ground
for the interruption of our hope, let us impar-
tially *consider* it, according to the *abatements* and
mitigations which the gospel hath made for
the imperfection of our graces, and the defec-
tiveness of our obedience; that we may not
wrongfully exclude ourselves from what the
gospel

SERM. gospel entitles us to. The greatest difficulty

II. here is to *get into* that state, to *settle* and *fix* that character, to which the hope of glory is annexed. But this *must* be done: and this *being* done, we may more easily, but must as warily labour to preserve and *establish* it; which will be the establishment of our hope, as a prevailing habitual temper. Which leads me to the last thing I shall mention.

Let us *aim* at perfection.

This will naturally awaken such a zeal and vigour in our breasts, push us upon such degrees of attainment, and engage us in such parts of religion, as to render our hope lively and vigorous. Alas! the generality of those who avow religion, seem to me to *propose* no more than just the escaping of hell. If so, what wonder at all is it, if their hope of Heaven be very feeble? If they only propose *just* to save themselves from misery, it would be strange if they should know any thing of joy in the hope of glory. The *higher* we aim, christians, the greater will our attainments be of course; and the more we find of a generous ambition of obtaining the *brighter* and *weightier* crowns of glory, the more of heaven shall we naturally experience in the perfection of our natures. This must inflame the desire, and lead us to a familiar converse; in proportion to which our hopes will increase; the *strength*

of our desires being one of the greatest incen- SERM.
tives and best grounds of hope. II.

Oh how happy they! who under a firm belief, a clear and full apprehension of the transcendent glories of a future life, can read their own title thereto in the presages and beginnings of it *in themselves*! who from the ascent of their souls to God, their ardent desires to know and resemble him more, may *promise* themselves the joyful gratification! They have a joy in *expectation* that the world in possession cannot yield; with the fullest assurances of the consummation of their hopes, *almost in view*. If joy belongs to the *hope*, what will attend the *enjoyment*? To the joys of *both* we are *invited*. Let us embrace the invitation, by an holy and heavenly life. Then, in the most rugged path of life, and in the darkest hour of death, we may lift up our heads with joy; and the realms of light, life, and love, opening to us, may entertain us with their glorious prospects. We may live in this changing world, and *leave* it too, not only with the *indifferency* of *strangers* and *pilgrims*, but with the *expectation* and *triumph* of *heirs* to an immortal life and blessedness.



S E R M O N III.



CHRIST'S dying Prayer.



LUKE xxiii. 34.

Then said Jesus, Father forgive them : for they know not what they do.

THE crucifixion of the Lord Jesus was SERM. III.
 an event attended with the most surprising and affecting circumstances. These were not *accidental*, but *designed* and *ordered* by heaven, for the vindicating of his innocence under charges of the greatest guilt ; for the testifying to the reality of his character, as the son of God, amidst the meanness of his appearance ; and of his being most dear to, and in the highest favour with, God, *at the*

SERM. *very time*, that he was treated as one of the
III. greatest malefactors by man. Nor were these
testimonials given to him from heaven *at this*
time, meerly to check their outrageous re-
vilings and abuses, by whose wicked hands he
was *immediately* crucified and slain ; they were
not *only* for the magnifying of our Saviour, and
the ratifying of his claims before Jews and
Gentiles then present ; but also for the justify-
ing of those, who should *hereafter* believe in
him, as the wisdom and power of God, a-
midst all the dishonours of his cross ; since
those awful and public testimonials bore to
him by heaven, *when on the cross*, did abun-
dantly remove every prejudice, which might
arise from *that circumstance*, against our relying
on him for an eternal salvation. He was, in-
deed, delivered into the hands, and put into
the power of his enemies, to do with him
what they thought fit. From whence they
concluded, that the charges exhibited against
him, and the penalty inflicted upon him, were
approved by the righteous governor of the
world. But such were the attestations of hea-
ven to the crucified, and *seemingly* forsaken,
Jesus, and at the same time, such a testimo-
ny of the detestable injustice of his prosecu-
tors, as to extort a conviction and acknowledge-
ment from the Roman officer and his band,
who

who had the oversight of the execution, and who SERM.
had joined with others in reviling him. I say, III.
a conviction and acknowledgement was ex-
torted *from them*, that, though he appeared
under the shame and demerit of a notorious
malefactor, yet he was *indeed* a righteous man;
and that what he *said of himself* was indisputa-
bly confirmed by heaven, that he was the Son
of God. Matt. xxvii. 54.

Our dear redeemer hanging upon the cross,
some hours before he expired, his death being of
a *lingering* kind, gave him an opportunity of
displaying some of the chief active and passive
virtues in his own behaviour, which he had
taught and enjoined his disciples. And oh!
how exemplary and captivating, at this last
scene of his life, was his obedience, his sub-
mission, his patience, meekness, compassion,
and charity! Every one of which was *peculi-
arly* illustrated, and enhanced in *excellency*, by
the painful and injurious circumstances under
which he exemplified and exhibited them.

The words I have chosen to consider, more
particular respect his *compassion* and *charity*.
Which, taken in every view of it, as it is here
related, manifested him to be the *image* of
the invisible God, in that perfection, which is
represented as the most expressive of his name

SERM. and nature, viz. love or goodness. This is
 III. here represented to the highest advantage.

There are in these words two things, under which I might enlarge upon them. Here is a petition put up to heaven, *Father forgive them*,—And there is an argument or plea to enforce it: *for they know not what they do*.

But I apprehend we may have a more distinct and instructive view of this very affecting passage,

By making some particular observations, with which the history furnishes us.

And drawing some conclusions or inferences under each, which justly follow from those observations.

Obs. I. Our Lord Jesus in the very depths of his sufferings, and when he bore the punishment of our sins, had the same interest with God as at any other time.

His stiling himself the *Son of God*, as he constantly did, plainly carried in it an assertion of God's *peculiar affection* to him, as well as his being commissioned by him. Thus his enemies seem to understand it: for when he hung upon the cross, they insulted and upbraided him with it, as a vain boast, and the pretention of an impostor: laying it down with themselves as a certainty, that if he had

been

been the beloved of God, he would never SERM.
have been subjected to such sufferings, much III.
less *left* under them, as he was, without a
divine testimony of an affectionate regard, by
a miraculous rescue from them. "He trusted
in God, they say, let him deliver him now,
if he will have him: for he had said, I am
the Son of God." In other words, if he was
the beloved Son of God, in whom he took a
pleasure and delight, as he himself said he
was, why at *this* juncture, when there is such
a call for it, doth he not deliver him? Matt.
xxvii. 43. The complaint which our Saviour
poured out, when on the cross, with a pecu-
liar fervor, had indeed the *appearance* of a
frown from God, and of his being deserted by
him. Matt. xxvii. 46. *My God, my God, why
hast thou forsaken me?* But whatever *suffering*
may be included in this expression, if we will
allow him to know his own circumstance in
this respect, we are sure there was no *abate-
ment* of the divine love towards him; nor
was he *less the* beloved, the delight of God, at
this time than at any other. For, in the same
breath, wherein he speaks of his being for-
saken, he claims and comforts himself with a
filial interest and confidence in God, in his
stiling him *his God*. The text also being an
address to God as a father, and being a prayer
for

SERM. for some of the most *unworthy* and *wicked* of
III. mankind, is an evident proof that his interest
in the court of heaven, and in the affection
of his father there, was equally great and pre-
valent; since *for his sake*, and *at his request*, he
could *assure himself*, that the father would par-
don the very chief of finners.

The inference that I would draw from this
observation is this, If our Saviour, when un-
der the painful and ignominious circumstances
of a crucifixion, was equally the beloved of
the father, as at any other time, then is the
offence or scandal of the cross ceased; or in
other words, then is there nothing *in this cir-
cumstance*, to weaken our hope and trust in
him, as a Saviour. Had he been the criminal
the Jews represented him; had he been cut
off *for himself*, or for any crimes *of his own*,
our expectations from him had been cut off
with him: the ignominy of his death had
but answered to the ignominy of his charac-
ter: then, the indignation, malice, and cru-
elty of the Jews, had been but the means of
God's testimony and indignation against him;
and we must have been deceived, had we be-
lieved and trusted in him as a Saviour and
Redeemer. But the same history, which assures
us of his being slain and crucified, assures us
it was done by wicked hands; which most
strongly

strongly asserts *his innocency*. He was delivered SERM.
 into their hands by the determinate counsel of III.
 God, but *not*, as an offender, or, as his ene- }
 mies styled him, a deceiver and impostor, but
 for holy, wise, and kind purposes; for he was
 at the same time witnessed to, as *highly approv-*
ed of God. Acts ii. 22, 23. His submitting to
 death, even to the death of the cross, is de-
 clared expressly to have recommended him to
 the love and approbation of the father, as it
 was the ground of his exaltation and advance-
 ment to honour: Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. Of this
 the text is an undeniable proof; in that whilst
 he was *numbered with* great transgressors, and
 represented as the greatest of those with whom
 he was numbered, yet he could, *in* confidence
 of his father's ear, and highest regard to him
 in this abject state, become an *intercessor for*
 transgressors. Isaiah liii. 12. To add no more
 under this head, the immediate and glorious
 attestation given to him from heaven at his
 baptism and transfiguration, might have been
 repeated with equal truth, when he was un-
 der the dishonour of the cross, "This is my
 beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."—
 Whatever stumbling-block then the cross of
 Christ might be to the Jews, from the contra-
 riety of it to their secular expectations from
 their Messiah, *we* have no reason to be offend-
 ed

SERM. ed at it, or to have our faith and hope in him
 III. suspended or weakened by it; since we are
 sure that he *never was more* the object of his
 Father's *affection*, nor had greater *interest* in
 the court of heaven, than when he was ful-
 filling the gracious designs of heaven, by sub-
 mitting to the most ignominious sufferings that
 earth could inflict. John x. 17.

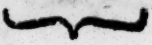
2. Obs. Ignorance, and error grounded on
 it, was the immediate cause of the vile and
 cruel treatment which the innocent Jesus met
 with, from those who put him to death.

This the text acknowledges: as if our Sa-
 viour had said, Their taking away *my* life is,
 in their account, no *murdering* of an innocent
 person, or of one who had a divine commis-
 sion; but they look upon it only as a *legal exe-*
cution of a false prophet, blasphemer, and im-
 postor. Some think our Saviour had only the Ro-
 man soldiers in his view; because it is immedi-
 ately said, "And they, meaning the soldiers,
 parted his raiment, and cast lots." Of *them* in-
 deed it might be *absolutely* said, that *they* knew
 not what they did; being most probably utter
 strangers to our Lord's person, pretensions, or
 performances. *They* might possibly be *included*:
 but I apprehend that the persons more *especi-*
ally pointed out by that expression, were the
elders and scribes, the *chief priests* and rulers,
 with

with the common people amongst *the Jews*, SERM. III. who had just before joined in a raging clamour for his crucifixion, and whom nothing less would pacify. ver. 13 and 21. *They* who delivered him into the hands of the Romans to be crucified, and, by their outrageous fury against him, even forced Pilate to crucify him, contrary to his conviction and repeated confession of his innocence. John xviii. 35. That *those Jews* might be *here* spoken of as not knowing what they did, is evident, from the Apostle Peter's resolving *their* killing the Prince of life, or the leader to life and salvation, into their ignorance of his being such a one. "I know, saith he, brethren, that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers," Acts iii. 17. In like manner the Apostle Paul speaks to them, Acts xiii. 27. But more emphatically still doth he express himself concerning this matter, 1 Cor. ii. 8. where, speaking of the gospel of Jesus as God's appointed method of reforming the world, and for the salvation of souls, he saith, "it was a wisdom which neither Jewish nor Gentile rulers were acquainted with, for, *if they had known* that the revealer and publisher of it, against whom they were proceeding in so tragical a manner, had been the Lord of glory, they would not by any means have crucified him."

Undoubt-

SERM. Undoubtedly this *ignorance* of the Jews in
 III. respect of the mission, dignity, and excellence
 of our Saviour, which was the *ground* of their
 treating him as they did—this their ignorance,
 I say, is *here* pleaded by Christ as *some* exte-
 nuation of their crime; as a circumstance in
 their *favour*; and as *some ground* for their
 obtaining mercy. Of this he was an infalli-
 ble judge, and would not have urged it in
 prayer to his Father, if it had not been so.
 The history mentions some things, which en-
 able us to see the *reason* of this plea for them.
 I can but mention them—They understood
 not, yea they greatly *misunderstood*, the *prophe-*
cies concerning their Messiah, though they
 heard them read every Sabbath-day: they had
 formed so different a notion of the *design* and
end, and of the *manner* of *his* appearance,
 whom they expected as *their* king and deli-
 verer, from what Jesus manifested when he
 appeared, that they could not be persuaded by
 any evidence, that he could possibly be the
 king of Israel. Acts xiii. 27.—They conceived
 the strongest prejudices against him, from *po-*
pular mistake, as to the place of his birth.
 John vii. 41. If the common people had any
 convictions of his divine character from what
 he wrought, they were forced to suppress
 them, for fear of being persecuted by their
 priests

priests and rulers; who had determined in SERM
Council to declare, and *treat* those as apostates III.
from their religion who should believe in Jesus. 

John ix. 22. To add no more, they had been
so accustomed implicitly to believe and act in
religion according to the dictates of their *ru-*
lers and *teachers*, as persons of the greatest
knowledge and holiness, that they judged of
truth and *error*, of *right* or *wrong*, by what
they gave out, however things appeared to *their*
own minds. John vii. 47, 48.—From such
prevailing errors, and *national* prejudices, in
which they had been *bred up*, and had been
taught by their guides religiously to maintain,
it is very easy to conceive how the Jewish na-
tion *in general* might be said, *not to know what*
they did, when they crucified the Son of God;
and the *reason* which *he* had of allowing an
ignorance arising from such causes, as an *alle-*
vation of their crime, and admitting of some
compassion. Though this their ignorance, and
the unbelief that attended it, was far from be-
ing free from guilt, and desert of punishment,
though neither *this*, nor any thing that *can* be
offered, can *justify* their ignorance, or their be-
haviour under it, (as I shall presently observe)
yet surely their treating our Lord as they did,
whilst they knew him *not*, *whilst* there was a
veil upon their understanding as to his real
character,

SERM. character, was attended with much less guilt,
 III. and would much more reasonably admit of a
 plea, and an apology, than if they had *actually been convinced* in their judgments that he had been the Son of God, or if they had *knowingly* crucified the Lord of Glory.

The reflection I would make from this is,
 How good a Master do we serve!

In this very prayer of the Son of God he hath, according to one eminent design of his coming, declared, or manifested, the Father to us. Since he is here making the best apology for his crucifiers that he could; pleading all that could be pleaded in their favour; from the knowledge he had that it would be admitted in the court of heaven, he has herein assured us, that the Father of mercies will make all *reasonable* allowances with respect to our crimes, arising from our frames and circumstances: that he will admit of every thing which really extenuates our guilt, or lessens our demerits: that he will put the kindest and most compassionate construction upon our acts, which is consistent with truth and equity. Thus as a father pitieth his children, so doth the Lord pity them who fear him, considering what is compassionate in their frame, and in their situation, or which will allow of a plea or apology for them in either. Ps. ciii.

13, 14.

13, 14. And what can we desire more? Oh! SERM.
how much of this do the *best* need! and since III.
the very murderers of our Lord experienced
this, as appears from his prayer for them, no
ways can be more equal than those of our So-
vereign and Lord, no decisions can be more
just than those of our final *judge*.

But, that we may not *abuse* this comfort-
able truth, or misinterpret this prayer of our
most compassionate Saviour, I would add a
third observation.

Obf. 3. That where our ignorance is so
circumstanced as to *lessen* our guilt, it *may yet*
be *so criminal* as to expose us to the just con-
demnation of God.

Whilst our Saviour in the text *softens* the
crime of his crucifiers, by a candid imputa-
tion of it to their ignorance; he yet declares
there was that degree of sin and wickedness
therein, as required a particular pardon.

There is an ignorance which *wholly* and *ab-*
solutely excuses what is done in consequence of
it; that is, where there are *no means* or convic-
tion of knowledge, or no *capacity* of receiving
and improving them. But it is certain, that the
Jews was *not of this kind*: if it had, our Saviour
would not have implored their pardon; as
their *not knowing what they did* would then
have rendered it needless, since it had *then*
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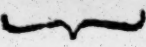
SERM. been *unavoidable*. *Pardon* indisputably implies

III. *crime*: When Christ therefore, as with his dying breath, supplicated forgiveness on their behalf, he in that *very act* laid the sin of crucifying himself *to their charge*. And most justly: since, though their *not knowing* that he *was the* anointed and sent of God, though their *accounting* him a deceiver and blasphemer, was the immediate cause of their putting him to that death; yet it is certain, it was the evil dispositions, at least, of the *Jewish* rulers, that was the *immediate* cause of *their ignorance* of his real character. Pilate his judge could plainly see, that it was from *envy* and *malice*, from the *rage* of the chief priests and other rulers, at the esteem that the works and words of Christ gained in the world, that they delivered him up to him to be crucified. Matt. xxvii. 18. Their want of *conviction* that he was *the Christ*, was not from want of *evidence*, for the most glaring and undeniable was produced; but their lusts hardened and blinded their minds: they gave up themselves to the most malignant prejudices against his person, which, for want of enquiry and consideration, they had rashly and groundlessly conceived and embraced of him. So that their not knowing *who he was*, and what they did, when they crucified him, was owing to their

their being under the power and instigation of SERM.
 the basest private passions. This could not III.
 but carry in it a degree of guilt; and unless
 pardon could have been obtained by the ad-
 mission of repentance, would have been finally
 damning.

Let this be for our caution and warning,
 and for the settling our sentiments with respect
 to our ignorance, or mistakes of judgment in
 matters of religious importance.

I have allowed, and I believe no one will
 dispute it; but that ignorance and error, when
 absolutely unavoidable, will as *absolutely excuse*
 from the guilt of acts done in consequence
 thereof, however criminal *in themselves*. Nay,
 I think it is as plain from the text, that what
 the mind doth not, *at the time* of doing it,
 know *to be evil*, falls *much short*, in respect of
 guilt, of the same action, when it is done
 under the apprehension and conviction, that
 it is evil. But then, let us not imagine that
 ignorance or mistake is *in itself* a *sufficient* ex-
 cuse *for all* that is done under their influence;
 however criminal the effects may be in their
 own nature. The contrary is very evident
 from the acknowledgement of the Apostle
 Paul, who most freely and fully *charges him-*
self with the heinous guilt of blasphemy, or
 speaking evil of Christ, of cruelly persecuting

SERM. and unjustly oppressing his followers; though
 III.  at the same time he declares he did it *ignor-*
antly, and from an *apprehension* that the author
 of Christianity was a blasphemer, and Chris-
 tianity itself, was wholly an imposture. *This*
indeed, he saith, was the ground of his *ob-*
taining mercy, *because* he herein did *not act*
contrary to the convictions of his own mind;
 but still he represents the facts he was charge-
 able with from his ignorance and infidelity, as
 rendring him a very heinous offender in the
 eye of God. 1 Tim. i. 13—15. We are blest
 with a *revelation* of truths and duties, which
 the weakest minds, if honest, may discern, so
 far as their faith and their practice is necessary
 to a christian character. But there are *corrup-*
tions and *vices of the mind*, as well as *lusts of the*
flesh; such are conceit, negligence, an hatred
 of, or an indifferency to truth, prejudice, and
 rashness. These may darken the understanding,
 and bias the judgment; they easily and natu-
 rally conceal the strongest evidence from the
 mind.—Now, it is altogether resolvable into
 one or the other of these causes, should it be
 said of any under the clear light of the gospel,
 as is here said of the Jews, *that they know not*
what they do; or should they act under such
 errors of judgment, as to lead them to the
 grossest in practice, and they not sensible
 of

of either, and the causes of this ignorance SERM.
 being *criminal*, the *effects* following them III.
must be so, whereupon they justly merit the
 consequences. To what end are evidences of
 truth proposed, and directions for conduct
 laid down, but to be *attended to* and *considered*;
 in order to our *knowing* what we *should* believe,
 and what the quality of our actions are, as
 good or evil. So far therefore as our *knowing*
not what we do, or our forming wrong judg-
 ment of truth or duty, is owing to prejudices,
 or to corrupt principles and affections, we are
 answerable for them before God; and in pro-
 portion to the importance of the truths and
 duties, which from those causes we do not dis-
 cern, our guilt arises, and our case requires
 particular forgiveness from God.

I would observe,

4. Our Saviour's most endearing improve-
 ment of his interest in heaven, on the behalf
 of his *enemies*, *whilst he was under* the extreme
 agonies, which their unrelenting cruelty had
 subjected him to.

He puts up a prayer *in particular for them*,
 carrying in it the most evident testimony, that
 he forgave them, as far as *he had been the ob-*
ject of their unwearied rancour, malice, and
 rage; and that the very blood which they
 were shedding, intended for the remission of

SERM. fins, might avail, even for *their* forgiveness,
 III. with his father. He had the quickest sense,
 and the most perfect knowledge, of the bad-
 ness of the *principles* and *motives*, which ac-
 tuated them in all their behaviour towards
 him ; as well as of the effects which they pro-
 duced. This appears from his reasoning with
 them, the charges exhibited against them, and
 the appeals he made to their consciences, at
several times, in order to make them sensible,
 that they were under the influence of the very
 worst dispositions. He doth not at this time
 reproach them ; nor in resentment and indig-
 nation pray to his father to vindicate his inno-
 cency, or decide the controversy between him
 and his enemies, by fire from heaven to con-
 sume them, as his disciples *would* have done,
 had he permitted them, upon an infinitely *less*
 provocation offered to him. Luke ix. 55. This
 doubtless he *could* have done, and *with success*
 too ; since he tells Peter, that had it been ex-
 pedient, upon his praying to his father, he
 could have obtained an effectual succour of
 angelick hosts for his rescue out of the hands
 of his adversaries. Matt. xxvi. 53. But here is
 no appearance of any thing like this. On the
 contrary, he took this *very* opportunity, when
 his enemies had accomplished their vile wishes,
 and were exulting in the obtaining the end of
 their

their restless attempts.—I say, our Lord took SERM.
 this *very* season, when he was under the great- III.
 est temptation to imprecate a curse, to mani-
 fest he was the image of the invisible God,
 in *those* perfections, which he most delights to
 exercise, by becoming an intercessor for the
abundant mercy which those transgressors need-
 ed, who had acted the most merciless and
 unrighteous part towards him.

He had *before* displayed his compassionate
 tenderness, by weeping over Jerusalem, when
 shortly to be made the scene of the divine
 judgments. He had before manifested a most
 astonishing patience, under the most causeless
 and continued contradiction of sinners. He
 had with the most winning entreaties addressed
 to the obstinate to yield, to the thoughtless to
 consider; and besought the guilty not to die.
 But the text is an instance of compassion, mer-
 cy, and tenderness, *exceeding* all the rest; from
 the circumstance of ignominy and pain, into
 which our Saviour was *now* brought, *by those*
very persons, for whom he was making the
 best apology that could be made; and was in-
 terceding for the very greatest blessing they
 could obtain.

I will close with two reflections from this
 observation.

F 4

I. How

SERM. I. How glorious an example has our master
 III. here set us.

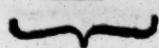
It is amongst his exprefs precepts, that his disciples should blefs those who cursed them; that they should do good to those who hated them; that they should forgive those who injured them; and pray for those who despightfully used and persecuted them. Mat. v. 44. This has been accounted a very hard saying; or an unreasonable and impracticable precept. But surely by none but those, in whom the most ungodlike dispositions of *malice* and *revenge* prevail; and who cannot distinguish between a base and a brave mind. But let us contemplate the *precept*, as it is here exemplified in the *behaviour* of the son of God, under circumstances, wherein pity, mercy, and compassion are exercised in so exalted an height, that there is no mind capable of discerning a moral excellency but must feel its admiration excited; none who consider it, but must be struck and charmed with the loveliness of the disposition. But let us remember, that admiration *alone*, which no prejudice can prevent here, is not sufficient. It is recorded for our *imitation*. Herein he has left us an example, that we should follow his steps. 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22, 23. And what more can

can a generous mind need to excite an ambition of attaining such a mind, than the beholding its intrinsick excellency and grandeur, as it is exhibited and set to view in the behaviour of our glorious pattern? Hardly ever did he appear more as a divine personage in any part of his conduct, than he doth in this his supplication ; if it be considered *when, for what, and for whom*, this supplication was made. If we did but seriously contemplate this spirit of our great master we should certainly catch it ; which comes recommended to us by its own amiableness, and enjoined us in conformity to himself ; though we can never manifest it in the perfection in which he did.

2 Reflect. What strength and life may the *hope of the penitent* derive from this prayer of our Lord !

Such was *their* crime for whom our Saviour is here interceding, that when the earth trembled it might have been expected it should have *opened* to swallow *them* up ; and become their grave ; that when the rocks rent, it should have been to fall *on them* ; and that every prodigy at the time of our Saviour's passion should some way or another have been calculated, not for their *conviction*, as it was, but

SERM. but for their *destruction*, as they deserved. It

III.  had been no wonder, nor any impeachment of the divine goodness, if *their* crime had been expressly declared unpardonable, from the badness of those passions and principles, which were the *cause*, and their *not knowing* the prince of life, and lord of glory. But oh ! what ground of pleasing wonder ! what an extent of mercy is exhibited by our Lord's recommending them to his father for forgiveness, when he was dying by their wicked hands ! oh the merit and efficacy of that blood which could expiate such injuries ! For we find that none of them were excluded the divine favour purely upon that account : since after Christ was risen from the dead, his apostles were sent with proposals of peace and pardon to them ! And oh ! more amazing grace still ! they were to *begin* their proposals at *Jerusalem* ! his very crucifiers were first to be regarded ! they were to be distinguished by the tender of a pardon, before it was made to any others. Luke xxiv. 47. This was to bring them to repentance from the amazing goodness manifested towards them ! what stronger assurances could be given them, than was by these several evidences, that their sin in crucifying the son of God would be forgiven,

given, provided they would yet receive him as SERM.
the Messiah, upon a *second* overture made to III.
 them, *after* he had received the *final* testimo-
 ny from heaven of his being the son of God,
 by his resurrection from the dead! Acts iii.
 13—20. How doth this consideration en-
 courage *the worst* at this day to repent! And
 how doth it raise their hope of forgiveness to
 an *assurance*, if they *do* repent! If the efficacy
 of his blood, and the power of his intercession,
 reached to the pardon of his *murderers*, what
 doubt can remain that *we* may obtain redemp-
 tion through his blood, even the forgiveness of
 sins, however many and aggravated our trans-
 gressions may be? This prayer was the lan-
 guage of the Saviour's blood when shedding,
 crying, *not* for vengeance, *but* for mercy. From
 this mediatorial prayer, breathing love and
 goodness towards the very *worst*, we are assured
 now he is entered into the heavens, he is *there*
 a merciful and compassionate high-priest, who
 can be touched with the feeling of our infir-
 mities; and with his dying breath gave a
 sample of what we might find from his interest
 and love in his exalted state.

Whenever therefore we commemorate that
 awful, that affecting, event, *the Son of God on*
the cross, let us consider the *security*, which we
 have

SERM. have for the blessings and consolations which
III. we need; and from the gracious words which
proceeded from his own mouth, with the di-
vine attestations from heaven as to the truth
of his character, may our faith and hope in
him be so established, that no scorns, re-
proaches, or sufferings, for our believing in
him, may be able to shake them.



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S E R M O N I V.



The Christian's Security.



JOHN xiv. 19.

—— *Because I live, ye shall live also.*

THESE words are part of a discourse SERM.
IV.
 which our Lord had with his *immediate* disciples, or with those who accompanied him all the time of his publick ministry. He had several times plainly intimated to them his sufferings and death; but this was so contrary to the thoughts of glory and grandeur, which they with the rest of their nation had imbibed, that they understood it not, and were ready to reject every such intimation as what could never

SERM. ver take place, and was not to be admitted.

IV. The time of our Lord's *actual* sufferings and death now approaching, he well knew would be a season of great trial and affliction to his disciples: and as he had *all along* expressed great tenderness and love towards them, he *now more especially* sets himself to prevent their dejection and despondency, when the sufferings from the chief priests and scribes which he had foretold, and were *now just at hand*, should be verified in himself. That this was his *main* view in this discourse, his own tender exhortation to them in the first verse manifests. "Let not your hearts be troubled," or terrified at what I have assured you *would* come to pass, and *when* it doth, as it shortly *will*, that I should be taken from you by death. Nor doth he only advise and exhort, but suggests a variety of supports and consolations to establish their faith, trust, and hope, in himself, notwithstanding the *seeming* incapacity of his accomplishing his promises arising from his death — To look no further back than the 18th verse, "Though I *must* leave you, saith he, yet *I will not leave you comfortless*," or orphans, as the word is; look not on yourselves as in an absolutely destitute and friendless condition, but let me leave you with the *expectation* of my *return*; for though in a very little time I shall

shall appear no more to the world, or in that SERM.
publick manner, as I have done, yet *to* you and IV.
for you I will appear again : it is not an *utter*,
final farewell, that I am taking : I die, and it
 is expedient that I should, but I shall *rise from*
the dead ; the truth of which you shall experi-
 ence by the many blessed advantages and fruits
 of it : “ For because I live, ye shall live also.”
 — Affure yourselves of this, and take the
 comfort of it.

There are two things considerable in these
 words.

Here is a promise made.

And a security given for the fulfilment of it.

I. Here is a promise made—*Ye shall live.*

By the general term *life*, the Jews under-
 stood much more than mere existence in this
 world. They thereby expressed pleasure, pro-
 sperity, and every kind of felicity. In the
 text I apprehend our Lord uses it in *this* gene-
 ral view ; even as including several blessings,
 productive of high enjoyment, and substantial
 happiness.

I allow that this promise, with what the
 three following chapters contain, more *imme-*
diately respected the Apostles : and there are
some things which cannot with justice be ap-
 plied to any other, as they respect their *extra-*
ordinary endowments, and their *peculiar* work.

This

SERM. This promise of life, with the others, were to
 IV. take place upon, and in consequence of our
 Saviour's resurrection : their fulfilment was
 not only to prevent the disciples despair and de-
 jection under their Master's departure by death,
 but to yield them the fullest satisfaction *by*
what they found that he was really alive again,
 and had triumphed over death. This seems
 very plain from the words following the text :
At that day, that is, when I am alive again,
and am risen from the grave, ye shall know
that I am in my Father, that is, that I am in-
vested with his spirit and power, and that you
are in me, and I in you, or, that ye in like
manner have my spirit and power communicated
to you.

We are not a *little* concerned in the con-
 tents of this promise as *made to the Apostles,*
 and *made good to them upon* our Saviour's re-
 surrection ; as it is a considerable evidence of
 the truth of that fundamental article of our
 religion as christians, upon which our faith,
 hope, and trust in Christ, as the author of our
 religion, and the captain of our salvation, rests—
 Their special office was to *plant* the religion of
 Christ in the world ; to be his witnesses
 amongst all nations : this was an *arduous*
 work, and called for *peculiar* furniture, in
 order to their *setting out* with a suitable ability
 and

and spirit, and their persevering in it, through numerous and formidable discouragements. SERM.
IV.

Now this *life*, promised *to the disciples*, seems to have a particular reference to the dangers of which they were apprehensive, and the fears, which followed those apprehensions. They had not been flattered by their master; but had been several times told to what sufferings the propagating of his truth and doctrines, whereby they were to reform the world from idolatry and vice, would expose them. They were to contend with inveterate prejudices, with established customs, with a fiery zeal for them, and with a multitude of examples. They were to struggle with combined power, with inveterate malice; to sustain a general clamour, the most obnoxious reproaches, the most despiteful usage, and cruel persecutions, which should be drawn upon them for his name's sake. Luke xxi. 12. The treatment that their master found, to which they had been witnesses, told them, that they were to expect something very formidable, in the course of their ministeries: yea, he himself bid them not to expect any thing better than what he had met, and should meet with. Matt. x. 24, 25. John xv. 20. These warnings were to prevent their being surprised when these sufferings

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overtook

SERM. overtook them ; and were intended as some
 IV. preparation for them.

But the text, which I think respects the *same* events, carries much more in it, as it is an actual *promise* made to them, respecting their spirit and behaviour, under what they should meet with, in consequence of Christ's resurrection, and in *testimony* thereof. *Because I live, ye shall live also.* You shall have an indisputable evidence of *my* being alive again, or of *my* being arisen from the dead, by the courage, patience, steadiness, and contempt of dangers and death, which you shall be *enabled* to manifest in my cause, and for my sake, when I am no longer with you. Since our Lord pointed to this *behaviour of his Apostles*, as a testimony to them of *his resurrection*, in which we, as Christians, or believing in him, are equally interested with them, let us a little look into it. And I apprehend this will carry a very considerable evidence of our Saviour's resurrection, upon the comparing the Apostle's behaviour, *before* our Saviour's death, and *after* his resurrection, from the account which the gospel history gives us of it.

They manifested they were men of like passions and weaknesses with ourselves, by the cowardice and fears, which they betrayed whilst

whilst their master was alive. There was all SERM.
 the reason in the world to believe that they IV.
 loved him : but when a cloud of danger gathered over their heads, as did when their Lord was apprehended, how did they all forsake him and fly ! yea, how shamefully and inconsistently did *one* of them, who seemed to be *naturally* the most fearless, behave ? Who would think that *these very persons* who were so fearful, should become fearless ? that they who were ready to decline all *hazards*, should not be moved by the actual threats of enraged enemies ! Who would imagine that they were the *same* persons, who *now* run into corners upon the meer apprehension of danger ; and *by and by* are not to be silenced by the prospect or pains of death. As to Peter in particular, the history assures us no two persons could more differ from one another, than he did *before* our Saviour's *death*, and *after* his *resurrection*. *Before*, he was so terrified by the bare challenge and suspicion of a servant, that he belonged to Jesus, as in a most solemn manner to deny all acquaintance with him. A little after, *he*, in the most intrepid open manner, before a great number of enemies, and probably before some who were concerned in our Saviour's death, this very Peter avows his relation to his master, asserts his divine character, and charges

SERM. the Jews with being his murderers. Compare
 IV. Matt. xxvi. 69, to the end, with Acts ii.
 22—25. Thus *they*, who were *just now* a reproach to themselves for their cowardice, are *presently* the wonder and astonishment of the Jewish sanhedrim, for courage and boldness : *they* who a *little before* trembled at the very apprehension of their connexion with their master, a little after manifest, in the very face of danger that they counted not their lives dear to themselves, so they might finish the ministry which they received from the Lord Jesus, and might bear that testimony to the gospel of the grace of God. Acts xx. 24.

And *when* was it that they found this spirit of life and power ? this surprising undauntedness before enemies, and contempt of threatenings and executions too ? Why, at a time when one would have expected they should have been quite disheartened, and sunk. It was, when their head and leader was gone ; when their master was taken and slain, as a notorious malefactor, with all the marks of disgrace ; so as *intentionally* to render his disciples *ashamed* as well as afraid of owning him. But lo ! though when he was *with them* they were alarmed at the mention and thought of suffering ; when *he left them*, they were not

to

to be terrified by their adversaries; nothing could move them.—How can this be accounted for, but as the text directs us to resolve it? viz. into the truth and certainty of their and our Saviour's resurrection, and as it was a testimony of it. That though he was crucified *through weakness*, that is, though he *yielded* himself into his enemies hands, waving his own power of rescuing himself, as if he had it not, yet he was raised from the dead by the divine power; and, in performance of his promise to his Apostles, had inspired them with that greatness of mind, that firmness, constancy, resolution and intrepidity, which produced such remarkable effects. To nothing but this could the change in their virtues and behaviour be attributed. *As sure* as they *thus* lived, or possessed their souls, and enjoyed themselves by patience under great tribulation, by meekness under the most cutting reproaches and abuses, and a deliberate contempt of danger and death, *so sure* was it that their Lord was *alive*, and that they derived *this* their life and spirit *from him*. This the Apostle Paul produces as an indisputable evidence of Christ's being alive; after he had enumerated several articles of his own, and the other Apostle's sufferings, he *sums them up* in *this*, "Always bearing or carrying about in the body,

SERM.
IV.

SERM. body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, or the
 IV. *very counterpart of his sufferings, that the life also of Jesus, as risen from the dead, may be manifested.* For we of the disciples of our Lord, who yet survive, are continually delivered unto death, or continually in danger of martyrdom, for his sake, *that the life also of Jesus, or that his power and influence as raised and ascended, may be displayed and demonstrated by what we can sustain and bear in our mortal bodies.* 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11. Hereby they not only had those supplies, which were necessary for their duty and comfort in the ordinary way, but from the *seasonableness* and degree of it under their *peculiar* pressures and trials, they *experimentally* found that Christ was alive, and had the witness in themselves of his resurrection and ascension.

Thus may this promise be understood as peculiarly belonging to our Lord's *immediate* disciples: the *life* here assured to them may particularly respect their patience, resolution, and courage, whereby they were unmoved under, and were superior to, their great sufferings; and their *discovering* this noble spirit and behaviour *after* their master had left them, so directly the *reverse* to what they manifested *before*, was a most satisfactory evidence to them that

that he was alive ; and that *this* their life was derived from him, according to his promise before he left them. From *hence*, amongst other infallible proofs, could they testify, that *that very* Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews had crucified, *God had raised up from the dead* ; and that it was *by him*, thus risen and living, that they were able to do and bear *as they did*.

But may not Christians in general look upon themselves as interested in this promise ; and justly extract consolation from it ? I think they may : allowing that there is something *special* therein, as respecting our Lord's *immediate* disciples, yet this assurance may be applied by Christians, as such. We are all directed and encouraged to follow our Saviour in our contemplation of him ; not only as one who died for our offences, but as risen again for the justification of our highest hopes and expectations, of which his resurrection is the *grand* confirmation. All that he had done, all that he is now doing, may be summed up in this, " that we may have life, and have it more abundantly." John x. 10. Since there is nothing in the *term itself* to limit and confine it, and the blessings *common* to the christian world, are expressed by *this term* in other places, we may I think without any impropriety, or abuse

SERM. of the text, apply this promise of life *to our-*
 IV. *selves*: being also warranted from other pas-
 sages of scripture to do it, in the three follow-
 ing respects.

1. It may be applied to the spiritual and di-
 vine life in the soul.

Scripture frequently mentions this under
 different terms. Sometimes describing it by its
principle; sometimes by its *exercises*; and some-
 times by its spring and maintenance.

By the spiritual life I mean, "An inward
 " active principle, consisting of the several
 " graces of the divine spirit, produced by a di-
 " vine operation and influence, whereby the
 " soul is prevailingly devoted to God, framed
 " for holiness and heaven, and tending to-
 " wards its own perfection." In proportion to
 the *strength* and *vigour* of this principle, doth
 the Christian account himself most truly to live.
 For, as it is allowed in respect to the *natural* life,
 that it lies not in *meer existence*, nor deserves
 the term of *life*, unless we are also in a capa-
 city of *action* and *enjoyment*; in like manner,
 as the christian finds a prevailing disposition to
 a converse with, and regard of, God, as his
 acts of worship are performed with an atten-
 tion, spirit, and devotion, or when the several
 virtues, which are the credit of religion, the
 happiness of the religious, and which should

prevail

SERM.

IV.

prevail in the christian's heart and conversation, are statedly found to influence and govern, he accounts *himself most truly* to live, that is, he most enjoys himself and relishes his being. And with very good reason : as this greatly transcends what is meerly animal, or meerly rational life, in the principles which actuate it, the objects with which it is conversant, and the delight and satisfaction which results from it. It is the health and vigour of our *nobler* part ; consisting in the harmony of the faculties, and in the right direction of the heart : from whence it is capable of exerting itself with ease and pleasure according to the dictates of an *enlightened* mind ; from whence it *feels itself* to be well. In a word, the spiritual life here, is eternal life *begun*, both in its nature and effects ; and eternal life is the spiritual *perfected in both*.

Now the text may be read as an *engagement* of our Lord's for the *maintenance* and *advancement of this* : as his *undertaking* for those influences and supplies, which are necessary to preserve and improve this principle ; for the encrease of those graces wherein it consists, and for those assistances, that may answer our various calls, from the oppositions, snares, and imperfection of the present state. Our tryals and labours indeed are not such as the Apostle's

SERM. *tle's were* : but those *we have*, call for a considerable degree of wisdom, courage, zeal, and resolution. For we are subjected to an animal life, which in its nature damps the flame and checks the growth of the spiritual life : we are necessarily conversant with a *body*, which has its own distinct concerns ; and nothing more natural, than those to draw off our attention from our immortal part, and render us indifferent to its state and interests. It is a great consolation, therefore, under our need of constant supplies of grace, for the several parts of the spiritual life, that our dearest Lord is represented as compassionating our infirmities, sympathising with us in our temptations, sufferings, and conflicts ; and imparting aid to us ; and this in *testimony* of his being risen from the dead, and ascended into the heavens. From him, as from the dispenser of all holy and blessed influences, the life of God in the soul may be carried on by the invigorating our resolutions, establishing our choice, assisting in trying and difficult duties, succeeding us under honest and hearty *endeavours* of being faithful unto death, and obtaining the crown of conquerors. For we must always remember, that assurances and encouragements are given, *not* to suspend our care and diligence, but to excite it : and when they have this effect, we may hope

hope for a supply from our head, of influence SERM.
for the carrying us forward in the spiritual IV.
life, to an advancement of it in strength, lustre, {
and comfort.

2. Life here may be understood respecting a resurrection of the body : and the promise in the text may be read as an assurance of it.

To this, the term in scripture several times refers. From the repeated intimations, which our Lord had given his Apostles of their being hated and persecuted by his and their common enemies, and upon his account too, it is very probable that their minds were filled with the apprehensions of *their* being called to the suffering of death, which their master had told them would shortly be his lot : and we find from their *deserting* and *denying* him, upon his being apprehended, that the *thing itself was very formidable to them*. Upon this supposition how comfortable to them was this declaration, when thus understood, as it *may be*, “ though
“ ye die for my sake and cause, ye shall live
“ again.” This may be as truly applied for *our* consolation. It was not any part of our Saviour’s design to *exempt* his followers from dying : but it was one of the blessed effects of his death, to rescue them from the *terrors* of their own, by assuring them that though the
doom

SERM. doom of mortality, denounced on the human
 IV. race, should take place upon them, as the
 standing testimony of God's displeasure against
 sin, yet their mortal bodies should not always
 lie under the power of the grave; that the
 dominion of death should not be perpetual;
 the grave should not be an everlasting prison:
 the time should come when death itself should
 be *swallowed up in victory*, and the grave *deliver
 up its conquests*, or when the body should be
 raised to life again. This indeed shall be the
 case of *all* mankind: *all* that are in their
 graves shall come forth from thence: and a
considerable consolation this is *intended* to be,
 under the *unavoidable* subjection of the body
 to the dishonours and corruption of the grave.
 It hath much in itself to scatter the gloom,
 that death in itself carries in it, that *the* part
 of our frame, which can and shall die, and
 is committed to moulder into dust, shall not
perish, but shall be gathered, animated, and
 restored to life.—But there is still more in the
 blessing here engaged for.

3. This life may be considered as including
 eternal life and happiness; or the *complete*
 happiness of the *whole* man, both as to body
 and soul.

To this doth the term most frequently refer
 in scripture. The resurrection of the body,
 though

though *in itself* it reflects *some* light, and sheds a reviving beam, when set against the seeming destruction of the body by death ; yet the real advantage of this its restoration to life, entirely depends upon the *consequences* of it, and the state of the soul to which it shall be united. We are assured there shall be a resurrection *both of the just and unjust*. Acts xxiv. 15. And whilst that of the former shall be a resurrection to life, that of the latter shall be a resurrection to condemnation. John v. 28, 29. Though the body therefore be delivered from the power of the grave, or raised from the dead, yet *that* resurrection only can be stiled *life*, which is an introduction to *happiness* ; an happiness in respect of the body as well as of the soul. Blessed be God we can thus extend the thought ; that we can thus extend our hopes, to the absolute perfection, and eternal felicity of both parts of our nature ! This is *the* life procured for us, and assured to us.

How doth every thing to which we apply the term, shrink and dwindle into nothing, when compared with this ! Were we destitute of the faith and hope hereof, what could we find in any circumstance at present to merit the *name* ? Our very privileges of nature and condition, the greater they are, would rather minister

SERM.
IV.

SERM. minister to a disgust of, and dissatisfaction

IV. with the present, had we not the prospect and hope of an eternal life. Upon this supposition, *reason* would be rather an affliction than a blessing, as the exercises and advancement of it would but give us a quicker sense of the emptiness and instability of what we call *life*. The more we had and enjoyed of that wherein we generally place it, the nearer our circumstances were to our wishes; the more unhappy we from the prospect and certainty of *death* before us. That, like an hand-writing on the wall, would spoil the relish of every thing, when arising in the mind, or invading the frame; and would be the more distressing, the more absolutely we placed our life and happiness on what is to be possessed on this side the grave. But, this is *the* promise, the reigning, sublime promise of the gospel, through Christ, even *eternal life*. 1 John ii. 25. It is a life pure and unmixed, one that has nothing in it *but* life, that is, enjoyment and happiness. One that is liable to no intermission or interruption from any cloud without us, or from the discomposure and changeableness of our own minds; which is so often the case in the present state. And, to crown all, the duration of it shall be perpetual: it is one unchanging everlasting day—*This is life*, or it is impossible

impossible to conceive of any such thing: it SERM.
needs not the foil of this state of uncertainty IV.
and mortality to set it off; but comes recom-
mended by its own intrinsic, transcending
excellencies. Pure and spotless minds being
joined to bodies exactly attempered and har-
monizing with them, bespeaks the most per-
fect life that creatures of our rank of being are
capable of. And he who hath *undertaken*
for this union and the perfection both of soul
and body, hath undertaken also that the high-
est ends and purposes of it shall be obtained.
For, because Christ lives, if it be not our own
fault, we shall *thus* live also, by rising again to
a blessed immortality.

This would bring me to the

IId. General head, viz. The security given
in the text of the making good this promise of
life. But this must be deferred.

I shall close at present with two reflections
from what hath been said.

1. How worthy is the gospel of our accep-
tation and of our adhering to it.

The great business of philosophy, was to
find out ways to balance the troubles, to for-
tify against the fears, and to provide for the
happiness of the present life. But whatever
that suggested, yea, whatever can be proposed
for those ends from *any* quarter, is, indeed,
delusive,

SERM. delusive, compared with what the gospel exhibits. That is contrived *throughout* for the relief, support, and joy of the human mind, under its various wants, anxieties, and noblest views and ambition.

It is not, O christian, to be wondered at, if from the knowledge of thyself and of the world about thee; if from the remainder of corruption and imperfection within, and the degree of temptation and snare without, thou art apprehensive of danger; and findest it difficult to maintain an even and uniform course of piety and virtue; or to proceed in thy race with any vigour, steadiness, and pleasure. Art thou not sufficient of thyself for these things? Thou art not. But this thy life is the concern of thy living Lord; who hath purchased, and is in consequence invested with, a power of imparting what is necessary for thy safe and comfortable progress too. Thou art not left to struggle *alone*, nor *just* to escape shipwreck; but from thine arisen and exalted Saviour thou art bid to hope for an ability answerable to thy work, a strength proportioned to thy day: so as not merely *to creep on*, but to *mount* as upon the wing of holy desire towards the object and author of thy felicity; to run thy race with chearfulness and constancy, till thou shalt arrive at the end of thy course, and be put into the possession of the prize.

To

To the philosopher indeed, death may appear, and by him may be accounted as it was, the *most* terrible of all terribles. But to thee, O christian, it need not be so; even though the shadows of the evening should be drawing upon thee, and thy day be just shutting in. Thy faith in thine arisen Lord, who hath *particularly* provided for thy support under this circumstance, may and should controul thine *imagination* and *senses*; and correct the representation which they give of death. *They* indeed tell thee, that there is an utter extinction of thy being; *they* can report nothing but what is gloomy and dejecting. But if thou believest the gospel, how *different* an appearance hath the hour and article of death? Since that assures thee of the surprising change, which the death and resurrection of thy Saviour hath made with respect to the consequences of it *to his disciples*. As it consists in the separation of soul and body, it is the *same* as ever. But he hath assured thee that *both* are *safe*; and that the parting is but *for a season*, in order to a more happy union which shall never be dissolved: for this he hath undertaken, and hath pledged his blood, his power, his life, for the making it good. What is *in itself*, as death is, a testimony of God's displeasure against sin, is through him an introduction to eternal bless-

SERM. edness, from the divine favour. Thy body

IV. shall fall as well as others, and become dust and corruption: but it is in order to its being raised again, and refined from all that is clogging, corrupting, painful, and every present inconvenience: it is in order to its being exquisitely wrought and attempered, to be a proper partner to a perfected spirit, to a fineness for the heavenly world, by its being fashioned like to the glorious body of its living and glorified Lord: and in this state of union shall thy *entire* person, christian, triumph over the power of death in the acquisition of immortal life.

Such an hope and prospect the gospel inspires, to cheer and sustain the true christian's mind under all the imperfections and infelicities of the present state, and the expectation of that most awful of events, "our removal out of it." And what is *still more*, we are *absolutely* indebted to the gospel for that *degree* of consolation and satisfaction which we now have as to those important futurities. Our present hopes as to the resurrection and glorious improvement of our bodies, their re-union to our souls, and their joint enjoyment of the pleasures of an eternal day, we never could have attained but by *a revelation* from heaven, as the gospel is.

Can

Can any thing come better recommended SERM. IV.
to us, or minister equal comfort and refresh-
ment to the christian in his passage? Obligated,
as he is, here to converse with such painful
scenes, to struggle with and bear up against
such opposition, and to secure himself amidst
such threatening dangers. Shall we ever sur-
render the gospel for any arbitrary fanciful
schemes of men? or exchange the certainty
and satisfaction which that yields us in those
things where *certainty* is most desirable, for the
mere conjectures, and sceptical fears and doubts
of the infidel? Surely, herein we should be as
great enemies to ourselves, as we are ungrate-
ful to God.

2. How much more comfortable would the
present life be, were we but more conversant
with, and did we but really believe the gospel!

Its discoveries and assurances are of such *im-
portance*, as nothing besides can match; and they
are *adapted* to the sustaining and cheering the
mind under every depressing circumstance, vast-
ly beyond what can be derived from every other
quarter. As christians, we *profess* to believe the
gospel, and in Christ our Master, as *the* true and
faithful witness: that we entirely confide in his
testimony, as one who could not possibly be de-
ceived himself, nor deceive us: that we form
our expectations as to our most *interesting* con-

SERM. cerns, by what he hath declared, and derive
IV. our consolations from what he hath assured.

Thrice happy they who *live* by such a faith as this; and govern their whole conduct by his representation of things invisible and future, with which we have most to do. But this can never be done, whilst, as is the case of too many, the gospel lies by as a neglected book. And though *in words* it is acknowledged to contain nothing *but* truth, yet is thrown aside for *known* fables, fictions, and romantick stuff. This is not only dishonouring the gospel, but it is depriving ourselves of the inestimable advantages it was designed to yield us, in respect of instruction, consolation, hope and happiness. Can a converse with *dreams* and *fancies* prepare the mind for the approach of an appointed and speedy exchange of worlds, or for an appearance at a judgment-bar? Can the feeding or amusing the *imagination* with chimeras, and things that have no existence, be any support to the mind under a conviction of guilt, and the charges of an enlightened conscience? or reconcile the soul to a certain separation from the body, when the dust shall return to the dust, and the spirit shall return to God to receive its lot for eternity? Eccles. xii. 7. Sure it is the madness of folly to spend life in feeding on trash to the neglect of truth! and of

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those truths too, which are vouchsafed to enable us to behold and meet the darkest scene, not only without horror, but with satisfaction; and even to render what is unavoidable, desirable. SERM. IV.

I would therefore intreat, and Oh that I might prevail, and more especially with the *younger* part of this audience, to converse with and consider more the gospel of Christ, from whence your happiness here and hereafter would be most eminently subserved. The truths it has revealed, with the evidence attending them, and your supreme concern in them, bespeak your regards and are most worthy your acceptance, as they are *faithful* and *true* sayings. The gospel in its very *title*, and in its general *intention*, proclaims *glad tidings*. The appearance of Christ in the flesh was ushered in with this solemn declaration, to which a multitude of the heavenly host bore their testimony by their songs of praise, and their invitation of mankind to a joining with them herein; as they came to spread a joy amongst them; a joy, extending to every thing wherein doubt and fear would have been the most tormenting. And shall *we* whom these blessed tidings principally respect; for whom these gladdening rays were intended; and who enjoy them through the gospel; shall *we*, I say, live strangers to them, and prefer every

SERM. romance before them? This is in the highest
IV. manner to judge ourselves unworthy of them,
and of the love and grace which is manifested
and magnified by them. O my friends, let
it not be so amongst us. But in gratitude to
God and Jesus, and in compassion to ourselves,
may we, from our converse with the gospel,
happily experience its *peculiar* efficacy to en-
lighten our gloomy path; to refresh our spirits,
weary with successive scenes of vanity, sin, and
suffering, in this vale of tears; and to promote
the *aspiration* of our souls, by the visions of
faith, and the raptures of holy love, to that
world, where we hope to see and enjoy our
once dead, but *now* our *living* Saviour and
Lord; and everlastingly to triumph in his life,
and in his love.



SERMON



S E R M O N V.



On the same SUBJECT.



JOHN xiv. 19.

—*Because I live, ye shall live also.*

THE time of our Lord's death, and de- SERM.
 parture from his Apostles, drawing on, V.
 and knowing what they would feel *from* their }
 love, and experience *for* their fidelity, to him,
 from the world, when he left them ; before he
 leaves them, he suggests to them a variety of
 supports and consolations, as he himself tells
 us, in the first verse of this chapter, to prevent
 their disconsolacy, and that their hope and
 trust in himself might not only *survive* his
 H 4 death

SERM. death, but gain *strength* and *stability* thereby.

V. To this end the words of the text, with many others in this context are adapted. To look no farther back than the 18th verse: Though I must leave you, saith he, yet *I will not leave you comfortless*, or *orphans* as the word is, I will not leave you *destitute*: let me therefore leave you in the comfortable expectation of your seeing me after my resurrection. For, though after a very little time I shall appear no more publickly to the world as I have done in person, yet *to you* I will appear again: since I shall rise from death never to die more, so ye shall experience it by the many blessed advantages and fruits of it: because I live, ye shall live also. I have already observed to you there are two things worth regarding in these words. Here is a promise made,—and a security given for the fulfilment of it.

I have considered the first, the promise here made, *ye shall live*.

The term *life* here is certainly general, as the Jews used it, and intimates several blessings and advantages ministring to the happiness of those the promise is made to. It is certain, that this promise, and all that this and the three following chapters contain was directed *immediately* to the Apostles; and there are some things that cannot with any justice or truth

truth be applied to any others. I have considered the import of this promise, as it was made, especially to the Apostles, and made good upon our Saviour's resurrection; yea, as an *evidence* of it, to *them* in their *public* character. But, notwithstanding there is something herein peculiar to the Apostles, I apprehend there is something *common* to the christian as such, for the *establishing* his faith in the most desirable truths, for the raising his hopes of the most valuable blessings, and for the promoting his joy under every gloom and discouragement. *We* are absolutely enjoined to eye and contemplate our common Saviour and master, in his resurrection and ascension; and to look to him as sustaining a character, and fulfilling an office in a state of life, even that of an intercessor, appearing in the presence of God for us. This I think is an undeniable evidence, that *we* are not *excluded* the comfort of the text, but may apply to it, as a promise made to *ourselves*, agreeable to other passages in scripture, in the three following senses. As it respects the spiritual and divine life. By which I mean, "an inward active principle, produced
" by a divine operation and influence, whereby
" the soul is prevailingly devoted to God,
" framed by holiness for heaven, and tending
" towards its own perfection." In proportion
to

SERM.

V.

SERM. to the strength and vigour of this principle,
 V. doth the christian account himself most truly
 to live. Further, this promise *of life* respects a
 resurrection of the body. And also, An eter-
 nal life and happiness ; or the compleat and
 unchangeable felicity of the *whole man* both in
 soul and body.

For these blessings, our living vital head
 may be considered as engaging to the true
 christian in the text. Because Christ lives,
 if it be not our own fault, we shall *thus* live
 also.

I now proceed to the second general head.

II. The *security given* for the fulfilment of
 this promise : and that is expressly said to be,
 the life of Christ. *Because he lives, we shall*
live also.

Now let us consider more particularly,
 what security we have from Christ's being
 alive, or being risen from the dead, for the
 making good this promise of life and happi-
 ness to the true christian, according to the
 particulars included in it.

Now I apprehend it points out these three
 things to us. That he is every way capaci-
 tated and hath a sufficient power for it. That
 there was affection sufficient to employ this
 power to that end. And that his own resur-
 rection

rection was a *designed* pledge, and *standing* security for it. SERM. V.

1. The life of Christ is a ground for our expecting life and happiness in the most desirable sense, as it declares him every way capacitated, and to have a sufficient *power* to secure it.

To this our Lord seems to direct the eye of his Apostles, and of all true christians, when he saith *that he lives*, in confirmation of a promise of life made to them; for without this *capacity* and *power* of his, his being alive gives no validity to the promise. But this we know, that God having raised him from the dead, *set him at his own right hand* in the heavenly places; that is, invested him with the fullest *power* and *authority*, as well as honour and dignity; constituting him head over all things, for the *benefit* and *advantage* of his church, not only for government, but in a way of *influence*; that every real member of his body might partake of those supplies from him, by which they *might* be, what as his members they ought to be. Ephes. i. 22, 23. It hath pleased the Father, that in him should all that fulness dwell, that is necessary to preserve and perfect his body, or christians who are his members. Col. i. 19. All that variety of graces and blessings which are necessary
for

SERM. for the *divine and spiritual life* are dispensed
 V. *by him* ; and he is *ordained* to stand thus in
 the relation of an head, a vital head, to his
 members, to declare his power and capacity of
 bestowing what is necessary to the progress
 and improvement of the spiritual life.

As our life also may imply our *resurrection*
from death and the grave, so hath our Lord
 from his life, a *power* of securing it. In this
 view did he declare himself *to be the resurrection*
and the life. John xi. 25. “ I have, q. d. a
 “ *power* of raising all at the last day ; and
 “ of raising all that I please at present : as
 “ I am invested with a power more imme-
 “ diately to raise up all at last, so I have it
 “ to exert at pleasure now : I can raise him.”
 Thus he hath life *in himself*, or a power of
communicating it, and quickneth whom he
 will : at *his* voice those who are in their graves
shall come forth, bespeaking a fulness and
 sufficiency of power to that end. And if he
 had it *before*, how much more certainly *after*
 his own resurrection, to which time the text
 refers, when it is said, *God highly exalted him,*
and gave him a name, that is a *power*, as well
 as honour, above every other name. Phil. ii. 9.
 And I apprehend it is to ascertain to us the
 greatness of *his power* in respect of his promise
 of

of our resurrection, that he is sometimes said to SERM.
raise himself. John ii. 19. V.

This sufficiency of power in Christ doth also extend to *eternal life*. He is superior to all the *impediments* to our obtaining it, and capacitated to remove them, as *he hath the keys of hell and of death*. Rev. i. 18. that is, his command is absolute over the invisible region of separated spirits, and over the silent mansions of the grave. But this is not all; for he hath a power given him over all flesh, both to train up for, and at last to *invest* those so trained up, by believing and obeying him, in eternal life. Our life, in the *highest* sense, is hid, or laid up safe for us, with Christ; which bespeaks his power of conferring it. Col. iii. 3. To him that finally overcometh the snares and temptations of this trial state, he will grant, from a power of donation, to sit with him on his throne, as he, having overcome all in *his* way to glory, is set down with his Father on his throne. In no one instance, *when he was on earth*, do we find him pretending to any degree of power which he had *not*, as great and extraordinary as his claims were; he always *then* made good what he undertook. There is therefore the greatest reason to believe him equal to all that he hath undertaken for, as to a *future* resurrection and an *invisible* world.
And

SERM. And if his life is attended with this power;

V. *his life is the security of ours.*

2. He pledges his love, and therein have we a security for the fulfilment of his promise that we shall live also.

Because I live, says he to his Apostles. "I, who you know have always manifested the greatest care and tenderness towards you, who have bore the strongest affection and have had your welfare at heart: do not fear me when I am absent, as you have that in my own breast that will speak and plead for you. He lives who loved you; and with a love that neither my absence nor my exaltation shall ever destroy." He had already given them so many testimonies of *this*, that he seems more solicitous to establish them in the belief of his *power* than of his *love*. Of the former they *might* be diffident; of the latter they *could not*.

The *disposition* as well as the capacity of the person who makes the promise, goes a great way towards a reliance upon it. Affection runs through the whole of this our Saviour's discourse, with a design to give a weight and worth to whatever was engaged for. For where love is, it engages power and every thing else in its interest; and where these unite in an *eminent* degree, it is a security upon which

which the mind may most firmly rest—To SERM.
this christians in general may look for the ful- V.
filment of what he hath engaged for in re-
spect of their life and happiness. “ Do not
“ fear my failing you, saith he to all, till I
“ cease to love or live.”

Who, upon so comprehensive a promise, can forbear looking to the proofs of affection, which he *hath* already given to the *world*? How much of this did his *miraculous works* display? Which were *all* of them wrought for the *benefit* of mankind; they were equal instances and wonders of *goodness* and *beneficence*, as of power: such as captivated the affections, whilst they created astonishment: all conducing to the benefit and joy of the needy and distressed. The healing the *bodies* of men proclaimed him willing to do any thing for their *souls*: his raising dead *bodies* to life was an emblem of his quickening *souls*, souls dead in trespasses and sins, and raising those who were his faithful servants to everlasting life. The disinterested and strong affection that the one proclaimed, conferred a security to every promise made for the other. But nothing gives that *degree* of assurance thereto as his death and sufferings, *from the love that was herein conspicuous*, whereby he was most eminently the brightness of his Father's glory and
his

SERM. his express image, as he is represented to us as
 V. love itself. In Rev. i. 18. he is represented
 under this character, "I am he that liveth
 and was dead, and behold I am alive for ever-
 more." Why may he not be thus represented
 amongst other reasons for *this*? "to put us in
 " mind of the most convincing argument of
 " his *affection* in submitting to die for us; and
 " to furnish us with the most solid assurance
 " that the same love still lives in his *exalted*
 " state, that led him once to abase and hum-
 " ble himself as low as death itself." His
 death is always resolved into his love as the
 cause of it. And indeed we cannot conceive
 of any other cause from whence such an event
 should flow. Eph. v. 2, 25. Rev. i. 5. Since
 there could be no other inducement but com-
 passion to our misery, whenever his *death* is
mentioned, his *affection* is strongly *intimated*.
 It is a sufficient *description* and *character* of
 him, *he that hath loved us*: as if there was no
 occasion for a *name*; as if we could not mis-
 take the person; for it is *beyond all* instances
 and parallels. And doth *he still* live who was
 thus distinguished by his love to us? Certainly
 we may depend upon it, that he who shed his
 blood for us below, hath not lost his affection
 above.

How

How amiable is the representation of such love and power in *conjunction*, when promises of life and bliss depend upon it for their being made good? We are now bid to look up to our *arisen* Lord, as having our interest and happiness as much at heart as ever. *He* lives who once *died for us*. Surely then *we* may be very easy about our concerns as in *his* hands; and most firmly depend upon every word of promise he hath left with us, though he is at present out of sight. If he had *love* enough to die for our offences, surely there is still enough in his *exalted* state to justify all the hopes which he hath raised, that are founded on his promise; and to this he directs our eye.

He tells his Apostles that his affection to them was such, that he would not have suffered them to have gone away with the expectation of heavenly mansions, had it been delusive; he would not have *seen* them flatter themselves with an imagination of that kind, had it been vain, without undeceiving them. v. 2. How much less would his love permit him to *promise* what he knew he could not or never intended to perform? or lead them or us into any deception? Since he lives who loves us, and hath *so* loved us as to die for us, how sure and certain is the promise he hath made, that we shall live also, and what

SERM. performances both of power and love, may we

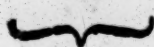
V. not expect from him, which he hath undertaken for?

3. He directs our eye to his *own resurrection* and consequent glory, as the strongest *assurance* and *pledge of ours*. "In that I live, faith he, having conquered death and the grave, as sure as I have done so, depend upon it, you shall do the like."

Those who know the scripture know that the resurrection of our Lord is a standing *assurance*, as well as representation, of ours. 1 Cor. xv. 20. "Christ being risen from the dead is become the *first fruits* of them that sleep." This allusion was well understood by the Jews; the first fruits were previous to the harvest, and of the same kind therewith; and the harvest was *consequent* upon that. Christ's resurrection being stiled the *first fruits* of those who sleep or die, is designed to intimate the *connection* between his and ours; that they were both, parts of the same design; only his was *leading*, ours *consequential*; but *certified* and *assured by his*. Nay, they who believe *the one*, are by the Apostle not only justified in believing *the other*, but are *obliged* to do so, or they will not answer the design of the fact. Thus he seems to me to speak, 1 Thess. iv. 14. "If we believe that Jesus died
and

and rose again, even so let us also believe, that God by Jesus will raise the dead, and bring them with him when he shall come at the last day." In believing the one, he bids us *depend* upon the other, the former being designed to establish and assure us of the latter; for, as he saith in another place, "if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen." In denying the one, we deny the other: consequently the evidences of *his* resurrection are at the same time evidences of *our own*, 1 Cor. xv. 13. As many infallible proofs as attended our *Lord's* rising from the dead, so many evidences we have of *our* rising again; for that is an established consequence of the former: and the more circumstances concur to raise the absurdity of *denying his* resurrection, so much the stronger is the security that we shall rise in like manner; nay, so much the nearer doth it come to an impossibility that we *should not*.

When our Lord had given sufficient testimony of his being alive after his passion or suffering of death, by being seen of those who perfectly knew him, and conversing with them forty days, he was taken up from them *into heaven*; or as he expresses it, *entered into his glory*. Now, as *he thus* lives, for the suffering of death being crowned with glory and ho-

SERM. nour, it is a pledge and security not only of
 V.  our resurrection, but if we are meet for it of
 our resurrection *to eternal life*. As when a
 person is raised to a throne, the family are
raised and dignified, and share in the gran-
 deur: so, if I may thus represent it, Jesus
 being declared to be *the Son of God*, by his re-
 surrection and advancement, true christians,
 to whom he acknowledges the nearest relation,
 are in their measure made the children of
 God, and coheirs with Christ. The *perfection*
 and *glory* of *his* life is a ground to infer the
 certain *perfection of ours*: his being raised to
 so great a glory as he inherits, was designed
 to beget in us the lively hopes of an inheri-
 tance that is full of glory. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. As
 the *forerunner* he is *for us* entered. As cer-
 tainly as he is happy and blessed, in conse-
 quence of his resurrection, he undertakes to
 see us in our measure happy too. Nothing
 less than this can be meant, by *our being with*
him where he is, and beholding or participating
 of his glory, and his *preparing* mansions of
 glory for us. Thus *since* Christ lives invested
 with a sufficient power, and retains the love
 he manifested by his death, and *as sure* as he
 hath conquered death, and is ascended into
 the heavens, so firm is our security of life and
 happiness, if it be not our own fault.

I now

I now proceed to the application of this SERM. reviving truth.—And there are some things V. naturally arising from it for our instruction and comfort.

1. Is Christ alive, or risen from the dead? hence we may give a sufficient reason of the hope that is in us, as Christians.

For by this we are in the general assured, and in a way of *rational* conviction, that our religion is divine, and the author of it a divine messenger. But to be a little particular.

Is he alive after death? Then our hopes *in his death* are firm and good. We know it was perfectly voluntary on his part, whilst it was designed both, on God's part and his own, to answer most valuable purposes. He gave his life as a ransom, as a propitiation or atonement, in order to obtain the remission of sins, and to keep off those effects and consequences of it which otherwise would have come upon us; and as the foundation for our being re-admitted to mercy and favour. Now by Christ being alive, or risen from the dead, we are sure the *ransom was accepted*; that his *death was admitted*, as meritorious and purchasing; that the designed ends thereof *were allowed* of by God; and that the promises founded thereon *should be made good*. This I say, is solemnly and publickly declared as by an

SERM. herald from heaven, in that *God hath raised*
 V. *him from the dead*. Had it not been accepted
 to these ends, we cannot suppose he would
 have risen or obtained the testimony from God
 of his good pleasure therein. But to satisfy
 us of this, is his resurrection generally ascribed
 to *the power of God*, or made *his* immediate
 act; it is to testify *his* approbation of his
 death; the compleatness and sufficiency of it,
 as a means whereby the honour of the divine
 law was vindicated, his abhorrence of sin
 testified, his resentments against transgressors
 so far satisfied, as not to impute sin *for con-*
demnation to those who sincerely repent. His
death it was which *prevented our condemnation* :
 but it was his *resurrection* that evidenced the
validity of his *death to that end*; and therefore
 when the Apostle asks in a way of triumph,
 “who is he that condemneth? he replies, shall
 Christ that died to save us from condemna-
 tion; *yea rather* who is risen again, and is
 at the right hand of God making intercession
 for us.” Rom. viii. 34. His *death* was the im-
 mediate foundation of hope; but his *resur-*
rection still *raised* it, in that it was a visible
 testimony to the world, that it was available
 to the purposes designed. Thus are all our
 hopes in the declared ends of Christ's death
 established by his *being alive*; as that is a
 public

public declaration of the validity of his death, SERM.
as accepted of God to those ends. V.

But further ; Is Christ alive ? Then all our hopes, in what he hath *promised he will make good*, are firmly established. Whatever he hath engaged for, both as to our spiritual life, and our resurrection to eternal life, is as *valid*, as his resurrection is *true*. It was by his death that he purchased the blessings for us, which the gospel exhibits and tenders to us : but our faith in that blood, and our hope of those blessings, are built upon and supported by the truth and certainty of his resurrection. Hereby our faith and hope in him with respect to pardon, life, and immortality by him, are become most reasonable and justifiable acts. Rom. iv. 25. For it was in virtue of his being the son of God, and by an authority grounded on that character, that he engaged for those blessings. And what could be a fuller proof that he had not *usurped* that title and character, than God's raising him from the dead ? Whereby should it ever have appeared to us, that he *was really* what he *pretended to be*, if not by such an event as his living after death ? If, when he put the *truth of his character* upon that issue, as he did, he had been really a *deceiver*, and at the same time *should have risen*, there would have been no test remaining for

SERM. us to distinguish the true from the false prophet; we could have had no satisfaction about the most important truth in the world; nor have any security against the most fatal delusion. That this *should* be the case, or that God *should* manifest his power in this extraordinary manner for a *deceiver*, as he did for Jesus, is what can never be reconciled with his wisdom, goodness, truth, and faithfulness. That the wise, righteous, and good governor of the world, should countenance an *imposture*, with such an evidence, as should *oblige* reasonable creatures to believe and embrace it, we may say is impossible, if we can affirm *any thing* to be impossible, from its being absolutely repugnant to, and inconsistent with his perfections. And I think the reasonings that are justly grounded on the divine perfections, are the strongest of any in the world. Christ then *being* risen, *he* is what he is *stiled*, the true and faithful witness, and what he hath promised shall be made good. Rev. i. 5. We are thereupon *bid by God* to believe in him; and believing in *him*, is believing God, who hath *to that very end thus* testified to him. There is a sufficient foundation to support *any conclusion that he hath bid us to draw*; and to establish any hopes *he hath bid us indulge*. Since God did not suffer *him* to continue under the power of the grave

grave, it is an uncontroulable evidence that SERM.
those hopes in Christ, which are *just* and re- V.
gular, are hopes *in God himself*, that the pro-
mises of *Christ* are the promises of *God*, who
by raising his son from the dead gave him the
glory of being his son, or of being his own
anointed. 1 Pet. i. 21.

Since then he who said he would rise again
the third day, which he did, hath also said he
will raise us up, and bestow eternal life upon all
who truly believe in him, *God* who hath *ver-*
fied the one, who only could have done it,
hath at the same time bid us *to depend upon*
the other. We have hereby the power and the
truth of God pledg'd as our security for the
fulfilment of what Christ hath said shall *fur-*
ther be done for us; and we may depend upon
the assurance given, that it shall be made
good to us, though the blessings are *future* and
altogether *invisible*; and though they infi-
nitely exceed all that we were ever acquaint-
ed with.

Christianity then is not founded on creduli-
ty: the christian is able to render *a reason* for
the hope that he indulges: if it is a *peculiar*
hope, he hath a *peculiar reason*: a reason,
which for nature and strength is fully equal
to whatever *degree* of hope is raised upon it.
He can *tell why* he looks for a resurrection,
for

SERM. for a glorious, incorruptible body, and an eternal life for soul and body ; nor need its *futurity* any way impair his hope, as it no way influences the certainty of the thing. He who immediately promised it, rose from the dead and ascended into the heavens, to confirm it. From hence the christian's hopes are as just, as the resurrection of Jesus is true. The immediate promiser is the exemplary pattern, and forerunner ; and he who hath *engaged we shall live*, hath *prepared* mansions of glory *for us*. The christian can triumph in his saviour's victories over hell and the grave ; and from thence can hope to be a conqueror as to both in his turn ; to be able to withstand the powers of darkness, to be rescued from the power of the grave, and to attain an immortal crown beyond all. The better we are acquainted with the *grounds* of our faith and hope, the more firm and steady are they likely to be as to influence and comfort. Hereupon,

2. How serviceable would it be, to look frequently to Jesus *in his exalted state* ?

The *first scene*, which as sinners we have a concern with, is his humiliation and death. But our thoughts are not to terminate here ; since he died to rise again ; and the evidence

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that his death was *accepted* and meritorious of SERM.
the ends designed, was his recovering from it. V.

Accordingly the text calls upon us to turn our eye from a dying to a *living* saviour; triumphing in his conquests over death and hell; possessed of sacred royalties in reward of his sufferings for us; employing his power, love, and merit on our behalf. It is *from his life*, as subsequent to, and in connection with, his death, that our consolations are derived. From *thence* is his capacity of making good what he hath told us, and of fulfilling what he hath promised us; from *thence* is he an *advocate* and *intercessor*. Considered as *crucified*, and under the disgraces of his humiliation and death, we find he was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks or Heathens foolishness. It prejudiced them against him; and they were ready to pronounce it madness in any to expect any thing from him. But surely their prejudices would never have subsisted, had they considered him as raised and living by the power of God. *In this light* how do we see light? In this view of him how do our expectations brighten? What a lift do our minds receive? What an accent have his words? What a stability have his promises? What

SERM. What an encouragement have we in our approaches to the throne of grace? The assurances we have of his *being alive*, and of his engagements for us in his *exalted* state, are designed to arrest our contemplations, and minister to our *joy* as well as hope. Probably the sincere and upright christian would be acquainted with more of *that*, were he but more conversant with an *arisen* Saviour. When we view him as *dying*, it naturally carries our thoughts to our sins and mortality, to our offences and punishment, which his death respects. When we view him as *living* and *arisen*, how doth our own life and immortality, our successes, supplies, and everlasting blessedness present themselves? Let us remember, that his death and his life should be looked on as parts of the same scheme and design; the beginning and end of the same work of grace and love; and therefore both the parts should be taken together; and our Lord contemplated, living as well as dying. To that the text, as well as many other passages, is a direct and immediate *call*, as our Lord there represents himself to us as one who lives, and lives for evermore. Let us frequently follow him then in our thoughts, as he is now in the heavens. One would think it was sufficient to

to attract both eyes and hearts, that he, who SERM.
so abundantly evidenced the friend below, lives V.
to do it still above. If we can triumph in his
death, how much more in his exaltation? But
this we cannot do, but by the exercise of our
thoughts. Where should a *sinful mortal's*
thoughts fix with any steadiness or pleasure,
if not on that Jesus who is our vital quickening
head, our enthroned friend, our designed fore-
runner, our constant intercessor, and the very
pattern of our life and exaltation?

3. It is of the greatest importance that
we now attend to our privileges, and improve
them.

We have many considerations left us in the
gospel of Christ to refresh our minds withal.
But none yields greater refreshment than that of
our Saviour's exalted state, in consequence and
as an evidence of his death's being accepted of
God for us; and, amongst other ends, accepted
as procuring for us a resurrection to eternal life.
But it is only by the exercise of our minds
upon this, that we can experience the life it
was designed to inspire. Its consolation is all
lost through inconsideration and inattention.

From the reluctance to death implanted in
our natures, and from the usual hurry or ebb
of the animal spirits as we draw near to the
grave,

SERM. grave, every one must see we have need of *every*
 V. principle and consolation to sustain the mind;
 and all is little enough to that end; at a season;
 that, beyond all others, tries their strength and
 goodnefs. Every one must also see the *peculiar*
 consolation, that the resurrection of our Lord
 yields under the separation of soul and body;
 as it is a testimony *from* heaven that the body
 shall be raised, and that the soul shall be per-
 fected, and that they shall be re-united in order
 to the everlasting life and bliss of the *entire man*.
 But how should the advantage of this be found
 in the article of death, if we do not now by
 frequent meditation render this thought fami-
 liar; extracting its sweetness, and bringing our
 minds under the power and impressions of it?
 We shall not probably have the benefit of
 it in death, but as it hath been the employ-
 ment of the mind in life; and as by that
 means our minds have been established in the
 persuasion of it, and our hope hath been
 grafted on it. To *this end* indeed is the truth
recorded; namely by frequent contemplation
to be lived upon. In this case we shall have
 it ready at hand for use; and may derive
 more consolation in our last hours from a
bare reflection upon it, than we shall be able to
 do from all our *reasoning*, if *till then* we have
 been strangers to it.

But

But no attention thereto will avail any SERM.
thing, which puts us not upon an *improvement* V.
of it, by our becoming true and sincere
christians. Nothing hath a more direct in-
fluence upon this, than the subject we are
upon. That is the direct improvement of
it; and upon the improvement the benefit
depends. We know that Christ liveth; and is
ascended into the heavens; then let us im-
partially and seriously enquire, Are we fit
to live with him? Are we qualified to be
with him where he is? None but the disciples
shall be with the master. We know that
there shall be a general resurrection both of
the just and unjust; that all that are in
their graves shall come forth and live again,
but to vastly different circumstances. The
difference of circumstances, is founded on a
difference in the character and actions; most
equitably so. John v. 29.

We read of a very great moral change,
that is to pass upon us antecedent to death,
which from the alteration that is made there-
by, is described under the figure of a re-
surrection. This is absolutely necessary to
render the other resurrection advantageous,
and to qualify for a resurrection *unto life*. Is
Christ then risen from the dead? Let us ask
ourselves

SERM. ourselves, are we risen with him? Do we walk
 V. in newness of life? Must we rise amongst
 others from the grave? *What* resurrection is
ours like to be? If it be hereafter a resurrection
unto life, it *must* be so from our passing from
 death to life *at present*; from a death to sin,
 to a life of righteousness, a living to God. Do
 but compare, christians, the temper and life
 to which the gospel aims at bringing us now,
 with the description that it gives us of the
 glorious life we have the prospect of, and you
 will soon be convinced, that heaven is *but the*
perfection of our christianity; and that the
 obeying our Lord below, is the very *prepara-*
tion of the soul for its being with him where
 he is. In vain do I triumph in my saviour's
 life, or in my own resurrection, whilst sin hath
 any dominion over me; for if that be the
 case, he lives but to *condemn* me, and my a-
 wakening must be to *horror* and *misery*. It is
 only a resurrection of grace, that can qualify
 for a resurrection to glory. But when we be-
 come *actually* reconciled to God, and our
 hearts and wills are subdued to a conformity
 to the designs of Christ's death, our hopes
 may justly rise to our obtaining a compleat sal-
 vation by his life. Well indeed would it be
 for *many* did they *never awake*; was the grave

to

to receive and to detain the *whole of them for* SERM.
ever ! Better, infinitely better, that its thick V.
darkness should cover them, than to rise to
everlasting shame and contempt ! Never, me-
thinks, is the inspiring truth, *that our Saviour*
lives, improved, till, through its natural influ-
ence, the heart be in some good degree attract-
ed to heavenly themes, and to the heavenly
world ; till we are thereby in a good measure
qualified to live with *him*, who is ascended
above all heavens, by an holy and heavenly
life. Never can the assurance of a resurrection,
which yet is unavoidable, minister comfort, but
terror, till by holiness we are prepared for a
glorious immortality. How great should be
our sollicitude then, to *be* and *act* conformably
to this truth, on which the refreshment and
everlasting benefit of it depends ? How should
this animate our endeavours after the highest
degree of holiness, since in the degree of our
holiness, we may see the degree of our hap-
piness ? Nor can we ever be losers in *this*
world, whatever labour a discipleship to Jesus
calls for, whatever pleasures or advantages it
obliges us to forego, whilst in return, we are
capable under *every* circumstance of saying,
“ As sure as my redeemer lives, so surely
“ shall I live, and be with him where he is.”

SERM. Thus by living *upon*, and living *up to*, this
 V. hope, it may be a *rejoicing* of hope to the
 end, even *to* the time, and *in* the very article,
 of death.

This leads to a fourth reflection.

4. The true christian may from hence derive great supports under the apprehensions of his own death, and under the loss of those whom he hath good reason to believe now sleep in Jesus.

We may find a refuge in the life of Christ against the fears *of our own death*. How much is there in this promise, and the security contained in it, to enable the christian to venture out of this world upon ? to calm, yea to embolden him ? Here is a good foundation for a willingness to depart, as the effect of a *rational* trust in a *living* redeemer, who lives solicitous for, and by promise is engaged to take care of, our life and happiness. Hereby every thing truly formidable in death is provided for. The body shall not remain under the power of the grave. The enemy is conquered ; and this may go far to conquer our enmity or dread. The soul itself departs not into a world of strangers : for when separated from the body, *it is*, though not as it *will be*, present with him who is its life.

It

It is a very dark cloud that usually encircles SERM. V.
us, when our pious relations and friends get the start of us. When our senses tell us 'tis *death*, the mind is immediately clad in fable. But in their case, as well as our own, we are called to look *from death to life*. Though they are taken out of *our* hands, we are bid to attend to the *safety* of the hands they are in, from the power, love, and truth, which are united, in their perfection, in an arisen Lord. *With him* is the separated spirit; *under his care* is the deserted mouldring body; he hath *undertaken* the raising of the one, and the union of both, in order to the *perfection* of life and happiness.

Death indeed is an *untried* thing *by us*; but *he* hath passed under it; *he* hath passed through it; *he* lives triumphing over it.

In the Lord's-Supper * we are particularly called to meditate on the *death* of Christ, of which it is the memorial. But were our eye *confined* to this, if we could follow him *no further* than to his sepulchre, and must *leave him a prisoner there*, alas! how different an entertainment would that ordinance be from what now it is! We might indeed see his love in what he *had done*; but what a damp would it be to our hope and joy in him, had he re-
K 2 mained

* Preached on Sacrament-day.

SERM. mained under the power of the grave! But

V. *now*, when we contemplate him as dying,
we are warranted to look to him as living again; as having made his triumphant entrance into heaven, both as dying for our offences, and as risen again for the justification and accomplishment of our highest, if regular, hopes. Let us always unite these in our thoughts, since we remember a living as well as a dying saviour; a glorified as well as an humbled redeemer. And, in testimony of this our belief, may the life we live in the flesh be by a faith in the son of God. Both his death and his life were intended as the means of our life and felicity; and as his death was followed by an *endless* life, as he was raised from the dead and dies no more, *both* may be the source of our joy. He *first* suffered, as this institution declares: but having done so, he *then* entered into his glory. Thanks be to God who thus causes us to triumph in Christ, to glory both in his cross and in his crown! May this ordinance promote the life of God in our souls; that principle of faith that worketh by love to God and the redeemer, that principle of love, that engages to the most ready and faithful obedience, to the practice of universal righteousness and goodness.

ness. May *we* have an evidence *at present*, SERM.
that our Lord liveth, by a more abundant sup- V.
ply of his spirit for our improvement in holiness. And may we come at last *to see*
that he lives, from our share in the fulfil-
ment of his animating promise to all that
are his followers, *that where he is, there they*
shall also be.



1870-1871

1872-1873

1874-1875

1876-1877

1878-1879

1880-1881

1882-1883

1884-1885

1886-1887

1888-1889

1890-1891

1892-1893

1894-1895



SERMON VI.



Christ's Second Coming.



HEBREWS ix. 28.

— *And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.*

THE amiable wisdom in the several steps SERM.
VI.
of the divine proceedings towards the
recovery and salvation of a lapsed world, can
never be truly judged of, till they are con-
sidered as so many *parts* of one scheme; *de-*
signed to terminate in a general distribution of
mankind to a final state of recompence, ac-
cording to the improvement of advantages

K 4

in

SERM. in a state of trial. Every step that hath been
VI. taken in that work of redemption which the
gospel reveals, hath a correspondency and
connection with this great and solemn event;
when they who have duly accepted of mercy,
and complied with the method of salvation
which the divine wisdom thought fit to estab-
lish, shall receive the *full* testimony of their
Maker's love; and when the obstinate, im-
penitent, and irreclaimable shall receive the
full wages of their sin, in being solemnly ad-
judged to a doom, answering to their con-
tempt of a mercy and grace, which had made
the most ample provision for their eternal
well-being. The glorious personage whom
God appointed for accomplishing the reco-
very and salvation of a ruined race, was to
sustain very *different* characters; and conse-
quently must make very *different* appearances.
The very *design*, as the gospel hath made it
known to us, required it should be so, for the
more effectual performance of the several
parts he was to act towards the compleating
the kind and stupendous undertaking, in a
manner most worthy of the glorious contriver;
and as was most adapted to the nature and
circumstances of the creatures whom he came
to save.

This

This context speaks of a first and a second appearance of the Son of God, as indeed several other passages do. The first, we are told in the 26th verse, was in order *to put away*, or to expiate, *sin*, that is, to procure the remission of the guilt, and to deliver from the punishment of it, *by the sacrifice of himself*. In order to this, he came in a very humble manner, and submitted to abasement and suffering. By this *many* wise and kind purposes were to be answered, all terminating in our advantage. Nay more, so mean an appearance as his first, was of all others the *most* suitable and subservient to his own and his Father's great design in his coming into the world. But the text directs our eye to *another*, a *future* appearance, to which his *first* had an evident respect in the counsels of heaven; and which ought always to be taken in *as part* of the same general scheme, as there is an established relation and correspondency between them.

I would therefore suggest some thoughts, recommending them to your consideration.

I. As to this appearance itself, with the manner here specified.

II. As to the particular end and consequence thereof in respect of *some* who are here *described*.

I. Let

SERM. I. Let us consider a little this appearance
 VI. *itself*, with the *manner* of it, as the text has
 expressed it.

It is stiled, a *second* appearance: *And without sin.*

It is stiled a *second* appearance.

That we may have a clearer sentiment of it, *as part of a plan and scheme* which the divine wisdom contrived for the benefit of mankind, and hath in some degree communicated to us, be pleased to consider.

Man by breaking the law of his Maker incurred a *double* penalty, *natural* and *positive*. The *former* consisted in the loss of the divine favour and friendship, which, to such a being as man, must necessarily be accompanied with unhappiness. This the reason of our first parents own mind led them to expect upon a consciousness of guilt, whether it was *expressly* threatened or not. Such a penalty is inseparable from the presumptuous violation of every law of God, whatever *other* punishment may be annexed. There was also a *positive* punishment incurred; which was an indispensable liableness to death; a subjection to mortality. Whether they should be re-admitted to the divine favour, and be restored to life, was altogether beyond the compass of their knowledge; much more *how* it might be effected;

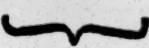
effected ; since both the one and the other *ab-* SERM.
solutely depended, upon the will and appoint- VI.
 ment of their offended maker. Under a total
 inability of their deriving any satisfaction in
 this most interesting concern, God, from his
 abundant compassion to our first parents, and
 through them to their descendants, who were
 equally interested therein, immediately gives
 them a promise of an extraordinary person,
 who should repair the damage sustained
 through their compliance with the temptation
 of the devil. This, to answer the penalties
 which they had incurred, could be no less than
 putting them into a capacity of regaining their
 maker's favour, and rescuing them from that
 death, which was inevitably decreed to pass
 upon all.

The promise of this extraordinary person to
 our first parents was general ; and though his
 coming into the world was not to be till a
 very *distant* period of time, yet the *virtue* and
efficacy of what he should *then* do, took place
upon the promise ; and the remission of all the
 sins of mankind from the time of the fall,
 through every following age, was obtained by
 means of what he was to perform in the last
 age of the world, when he should appear as
 the expiatory sacrifice for sin, by dying on the
 cross. With a view to this, and in considera-
 tion

SERM. tion of it, the forfeiture of happiness was ta-

VI. ken off; and man was restored to a capacity
 of obtaining it: and though death actually
 took place according to the sentence, yet, as
 the Apostle expresses it, it was *abolished*, it
 was defeated, and made void, with respect to
 its dominion and power over mankind; in-
 asmuch as the body, over which it seemed to
 triumph, should be delivered from it by a re-
 surrection. 2 Tim. i. 10.

As the time of this extraordinary person's
 appearance approached, promises of him were
 still more express, and descriptions were more
 full. At length, and in the fulness of time
 he comes, in the *fittest*, as well as the appoint-
 ed, season; he calls the world to repentance;
 enlightens it with the knowledge of truth and
 duty; proclaims reconciliation and good-will
 in heaven towards men; gives them the
 strongest assurances of an eternal happiness
 and misery after death, to influence their hope
 and fear: with the plainest directions, and
 the most sufficient assistances, for obtaining
 the one and escaping the other. And as the
 close of this part of the scene, he submits him-
 self to death, gives his life, as a testimony
 of the truth he had delivered, and of the
 grace he had revealed; and in obedience to his
 father's will, as a ransom for the sins of the
 world.

world. John xviii. 37. Matt. xx. 28. Thus he SERM.
came forth *from* the father and came *into* the VI.
world. This was his *first* appearance. 

But lo ! he *disappears* ; he *leaves* the world by death ; from whence the hopes and expectations, even of his disciples, seem to expire with him. But even under their incredulity and despair, their hopes in and from him were *revived*. For as he disappeared by death, he rises from the dead, *as* and *when* he said he would ; and gives them all desirable satisfaction, that it was he himself whom they knew to be crucified and laid in the sepulchre, by shewing himself to them again and again. This being done, he leaves the world, and goes to the father. John xvi. 28. He was taken up before their eyes, a cloud conveyed him out of the sight of the spectators ; the heavens have received him ; he is sat down on the right hand of the majestic throne there, and our faith, hope, and trust, must be in an *unseen* favour. 1 Pet. i. 8.

But he *will* appear *again*. He is gone into the heavens ; but he shall be revealed *from thence*. His commission is not yet *completed*. In his *first* appearance he assumed and acted in the character of a favour and redeemer : in his *second* he will be manifested a judge, as the *finishing* act of his authority and power, and
the

SERM. the *accomplishment* of his redeeming design:

VI. in that it will terminate. The heavens have
 { received him, where he continues till the time
 fixed for the compleating or consummating of
 all things under his administration: but then
 he returns. Acts iii. 21.

And this the text tells us is to be *without sin*.

This expression is by no means to be understood *literally*. His *first* appearance was as truly without sin, as his second can be. None could charge or convict him of any such thing. He challenged his most inveterate enemies on this head, John viii. 46.—The word *sin* here must stand, as it doth in many other places, for a *sin-offering*. And then by *appearing without sin*, the apostle must either mean, that he would not come under that disguise of meanness and abasement, which he submitted to in pursuance of his design of expiating sin, which was the *principal* view of his *first* appearance: or that he would not offer himself *again*, nor appear a second time *to take away the sins of the world*: No, this he had done *once*, and it would never be *repeated*. This *latter* sense perfectly agrees with the similitude, which the Apostle brings for the illustration of what he here declares of Christ's *second* coming, in the preceding verse. "As, saith he, it is appointed for men *once to die*," and
 after

after they are dead they shall *never* return to SERM.
 their former state of life, to be put upon a VI.
 fresh trial of their obedience, but have only }
 judgment to expect in consequence of what
 they have *already* done ; “ So, saith he, Christ
 being *once* offered to bear the sins of many,”
 when he appears *again*, as he *will* do, shall
 not appear for *that end*, shall not come *to die*,
 or to sustain a *punishment due to our* sins, but
 in a proper character to pronounce a final and
 compleat absolution, to invest with a perfect
 redemption and salvation, which he hath pur-
 chased a right of bestowing, upon those who look
 for his appearance. From the very nature of
 the thing we are led to collect, that his second
 coming will carry a widely different *aspect* from
 what his first did ; as the characters he sus-
 tained, and the designs to be executed, *under*
each, are so different. When he came as *the*
faviour to instruct, reform, and redeem man-
 kind, his appearance was suited to the end he
 had in view ; even that of a very humble
 mean, in the form or condition of a servant.
 When he came to give himself an offering for
 sin, he appeared in the *likeness of sinful* flesh.
 But when he comes a second time, as it shall
not be to suffer and die *again*, it shall be in a
reverse of circumstances. His *appearance* shall
 be suitable to the dignity and majesty of cha-
 racter

SERM. racter, which he shall *then* sustain. This event
VI. is several times mentioned both by our Lord
and his apostles: but hardly ever by the one
or the other, without some description of its
magnificence. Doubtless, as it is accommodated
to our conception, it must fall greatly short of
the thing itself. Not to multiply passages
which exhibit the *manner* of our Lord's second
descent, I shall mention that in Luke ix. 26.
where he himself tells us that "the son of
man shall come in his own glory;" *that*
which he had with the father before the world
was; that he shall also come "in the glory of
his father." *This*, as it was spoken to the
Jews, carries a plain reference to those awful
and majestick appearances, with which their
nation was acquainted. *To them* God was
wont to manifest himself in a bright shining
cloud or flame of fire; and when the cloud a
little opened which enclosed the glory, "the
sight of the glory of the Lord, it is said, was
like devouring fire." Ez. xxiv. 16, 17. How
naturally would the Jews, upon our Lord's
mentioning the glory of God, turn their
thoughts to the manner of the divine appear-
ance at mount Sinai when the law was given,
which was the most august and awful mani-
festation of the divine majesty, that their na-
tion ever beheld; which threw the vast assem-
bly

bly into a trembling ; and made Moses him- SERM.
self exceedingly to fear and quake. But far- VI.
ther, our Lord declares his future descent will
be " with the glory of his holy angels." He
will come with ten thousands of holy ones :
those exalted spirits shall attend him in their
robes of state ; and display the lustre of their
nature. He will bring the splendour of his
court with him ; and appear in the magnifi-
cence of heaven. Such a retinue will greatly
inhance the glory of his appearance ; whose
attendance is not meerly for sacred pomp, or to
increase the solemnity of the event, but as the
witnesses and ministers of his justice. Matt.
xiii. 40—43. Well may this be stiled his glo-
rious appearance, when it shall be attended
with this united magnificence. In a word ;
he will then be manifested to be the *visible*
representation or image of the *invisible* God.
Every eye shall see him ; and behold him un-
der those circumstances of dignity and majesty,
as shall sufficiently evidence his *avowed* rela-
tion *to God* as his son and messenger ; and his
relation *to us* as our saviour, master, and ap-
pointed judge.

This may suffice for the manner of our
Lord's second appearance. But,

II. It may be serviceable to consider the
particular end and consequence of his second

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L

coming,

SERM. coming, as to *some*, who are also here described.
 VI.

The *end* here specified is *their salvation*. For *this* he shall appear; this shall be the consequence of it to *some*. He came at *first*, as I have observed, under the character and to perform the office of a saviour. This was testified in the import of the name given him, even *Jesus*. Matt. i. 21. The several parts and offices our Lord undertook and executed when on earth, terminated and centered in *this end*. For the subserving this design he taught, warned, and counselled; gave out laws with annexed promises and threatenings; all he did and suffered by the will and appointment of God, all that Christ himself freely and generously submitted to, was to save the world. John iii. 17. He is at present invisible; but we are assured that he is carrying on the same design, as an intercessor. Heb. vii. 25. Nevertheless, *these* acts are but *preparatory* to what the text refers; and the characters under which he *then* acted, the offices he *then* sustained, were different from that, with which the text intimates him to be hereafter invested.

What that *will be*, with the *magnificence* which will attend it, our master himself has told us. Matt. xxv. 31, 32. "When the son
 of

of man shall come in his glory and all the SERM.
 holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon VI.
 the throne of his glory, before him shall be
 gathered all nations, and he shall separate them
 one from another as a shepherd divideth his
 sheep from the goats." To what end this?
 Why, for that which in its very nature is most
 solemn and awakening, even for a *judicial*
 acquittance and condemnation, an *actual* and
 final rewarding and punishing; a *consigning* to
 an happiness or misery, unchangeable in their
 nature, eternal in their duration, for intense-
 ness and perfection of *degree*, exceeding the
 utmost stretch of our imagination. It is to
 this *last* act of Christ, as minister in the di-
 vine kingdom, which the text relates, when
 it saith, he shall *appear to the salvation* of those
 who look for him: it implies his *actual con-*
ferring it upon them; his *investing* them with
 that life and happiness he intended in the
 whole of his mediatorial undertaking. His
first coming was to *purchase* and *prepare*; his
second to *adjudge* and *confer*.

It is true, all who perseveringly comply
 with the terms of the gospel, may be said to
 be saved *already*, as those who believe not in
 Jesus are declared to be condemned *already*:
 that is, the one *shall be* as infallibly happy and
 the other as infallibly miserable, as if the

SERM. judge had passed the sentence. It is also with
 VI. me as evident a truth, that the one shall share
 a great and glorious *part* of the blessedness
 promised, and the other shall equally share the
 woe threatened, as they draw off *by death*.
 But the *full* and perfect accomplishment both
 of the promises and threatenings shall not be
 till the resurrection: "till the Lord himself shall
 descend again from heaven with a shout, with
 the voice of the Archangel, and the trumpet
 of God." 1 Thess. iv. 16. A figurative ex-
 pression, signifying the summoning all that are
 in their graves; and the absolute sufficiency
 of our Lord's power to raise the dead out of
 the bed of the grave, as a shout or trumpet is
 sufficient to assemble a multitude, and to
 awake out of sleep, in order to receive a final
 sentence from his mouth. This is the very
 design of our Lord's second appearance. He
 will then sustain the character of judge; and
 come on purpose to put some into the *full* pos-
 session of the glorious inheritance, to confer
 the crown of righteousness in all its weight
 and lustre, and to set it, as it were, on their
 heads. This is the *last* part of his office as
 the Saviour of his people, which he will then
 execute by their *complete* and *consummate* blef-
 sedness. When the Apostle declares, as in 2
 Thess i. 10, "In that day," referring to Christ's
 future

future appearance, "he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them who believe;" why may not this be admitted as included therein, That he shall then be honoured as a *complete* and *perfect* Saviour? as making good that character in the highest sense, by fulfilling the promises he made, by proving the sincerity and kindness of every step he took, and justifying the faith and hope of those who relied upon him, in the glorious inheritance he will *then personally* bestow? and investing them in the *full* possession of that kingdom which he assured them was prepared for them? Then shall the love and faithfulness of the great Master, and the salvation of his faithful disciples be revealed in its *full* glory. *Then* shall his saints glory *in him*, and that way give glory *to him*. Lo! this is he, *the Lord, the Saviour!* We *believed* and *trusted* that he was *the* person to redeem, and bestow eternal life upon us! *Now* we *see* it, we *feel* it; *now* our faith and hope are exchanged for conviction and experience!

Thus, and to this end, will Christ appear to the salvation of *some*. Thus will *some* be able, with an ecstasy *unknown* at present, to breath their triumphant acclamations and their grateful ascriptions of salvation, to him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. Rev. vii. 10.

SERM. But who are *these*? The text specifies them
 VI. by this character, "such as look for Christ's
 "second appearance." This is an essential
 ingredient in their character.

To the consideration of it I should now proceed. But as I cannot finish it, I must drop it for the present. And shall now conclude with two or three reflections.

I. Will Christ appear a second time in his proper glory, this certainly ought in reason to take off the impressions, which the meanness of his first may occasion in some weak minds.

It was not without wise and kind reasons that he came first under that humble form and appearance, which it is allowed he did. They were most suitable to the office which he then sustained; and were of all others most conducive to our benefit. But when he comes again to discharge another character, he will appear in another manner answerable thereto. When I represent to myself my Saviour coming in the clouds of heaven, attended with his mighty angels, in that form of God which he did not assume before, with the external ensigns, the shining striking pomps of the Lord from heaven—Under this contemplation, I say, can any prejudice remain upon my mind, from any of the circumstances or consequences of his first appearance? Was he
 delivered

delivered unto death? *He was.* Did he suffer as a malefactor? It is true, *he did.* But what just offence, or occasion of stumbling is there in his cross? Is he not risen *from* the dead? Am I not from *thence* assured he *could not* be the person his enemies represented him? Nay, that he could not *but* be what he himself said that he was; and that he will come again as judge of the world, for *he said he would*? His being crucified, appeared to the world to be the effect of weakness; or the being *unable* to deliver himself out of his enemies hands: though he himself once and again proved it was far otherwise: yet be it so, that he permitted himself to be taken and by wicked hands crucified and slain, yet he liveth again by the power of God; and will *hereafter* appear with the glory of God: that is, in a manner every way suitable to the Lord from heaven and judge of the world. His first manifestation was under those disguises which eclipsed his real and essential dignity. But what then, since it was *preparatory* to, and *connected* with a most triumphant appearance, as the reward of his sufferings, and the compleating of his mediatorial commission. There was nothing in his past appearance to cloud, or expose him to the disregard of an unthinking prejudiced world, compared with what there *will* be in his fu-

SERM. ture coming to ennoble him and to strike the
 VI. world into astonishment. They who now
 want a *sensible* form, a *visible* glory to dazzle
 and convince them, shall *then* have it: They
 who account nothing regardable, but what
 resembles the pomp and splendor of this
 world, will *then* meet with a vision and scenes,
 if they have not a care, so awful and illustri-
 ous as to *overwhelm* them. A scene, it will
 be, infinitely exceeding all the measures of
 human imagination and thought! There is
 nothing we are acquainted with, from whence
 we can derive any proportionate idea of it;
 nor have we words to express, or conceptions
 to take in, that glorious and terrible event.

Though his first and second coming are at
 a distance from one another, in point of time,
 yet, as they are both of them parts of one
 plan, they should be united in our minds.
 The first should be considered as laying a
 foundation for *the second*. His *resurrection* is,
 as it were, the link that unites both parts of
 the chain. That proved him a divine mes-
 senger when he was upon earth; and is the
 standing confirmation that he will come again
 as he testified: by his resurrection God has
 given assurance to all, that he will come as
 judge of the world. Acts xvii. 31. Were
 both these appearances of our Lord taken to-
 gether,

gether, no prejudices against him on the ac-
count of the *former* could subsist; since the
finishing of the scene will be by a triumphant
appearance, designed for *his* publick vindica-
tion, as well as the *world's* conviction.

SERM.

VI.

2. Will Christ appear a second time in
glory for judgment? This gives great force to
the authority of his laws, and calls for our
firmest reliance on his promises and threat-
enings.

By what rule can we suppose he will then
proceed, but by *that* which he himself hath
given? Or for what will he call to an ac-
count, but for the credit we have given to
his declarations and discoveries, and for our
regards to his authority in his precepts? Can
we think that he will then dispense with the
terms he hath fixed, which are really *in them-
selves a dispensation*? that is, they are greatly
below the rigor of the law, and adapted to the
frailty and imperfection of our state. The
sinner may take refuge in the character of a
Saviour; and fondly flatter himself, he shall
meet with a mercy from thence, which will
wipe out all his guilty score. But oh! that
such would remember, this is turning both
his first and second appearance into a mere
farce, or a mock shew. Did he, when on
earth, enact and prescribe, and ratify his au-
thority

SERM. thority by the most indisputable credentials?

VI. Will he come again, to gather all nations before him for their doom? And, after all, shew no regard to his own laws, or publickly dispense with the most insolent contempt of them! How infatuating and befooling is vice! Surely his *intended* descent hereafter, should establish the credit and awfulness of his threatenings against such, when they are solemnly assured that he comes with the very views of executing what he hath denounced. 2 Theff. i. 7, 8. The characters he assumed when on earth to answer the beneficent ends of his first appearance, will be asserted and vindicated when he comes the second time, against all who have ungratefully perverted and denied them.

This may also establish the credit of his *promises* with us. He who hath engaged for pardon to the penitent; for a resurrection to eternal life to the perseveringly obedient; for mansions of glory in the presence of God, there to reign and rejoice for ever—He, I say, who hath promised these, comes on purpose to *perform*, to put into full possession. Whatever we have done in dependance on his word, both as to active services, and the committing our mouldering bodies with our departing spirits to his custody, we shall find he hath authority

thority and power to answer and make good. SERM. VI.
 No regular hopes and trust in him, however raised, shall fail ; no acts of love and duty shall be unrewarded. The kindness manifested in his first coming, will not admit of the least suspicion of his faithfulness and love to those, on whose behalf he hath engaged to appear again. From the assured magnificence and lustre of his second coming, we may most justly conclude it is an *extraordinary* design and event which that is to usher in ; equally ministring to the honour and joy of his servants, to the confusion and the terror of his enemies. Whatever therefore it costs us, "let us be stedfast in the faith, immoveable in the hope, and always abounding in the work of the Lord ; since as surely as he will come again, so sure we are, that our hopes and labour will not be in vain."

3. Will Christ appear a second time with such a glory and to such an end, How useful should we find it frequently to turn our thoughts to this scene !

It is true, these are thoughts so different from our ordinary ones, and our minds are so unconversant with any thing but meer trifles, that when matters of this kind are represented, they appear all imagination and dream, fiction and fable.

It

SERM. It is acknowledged, this event will not be the effect of *natural* causes. But, unless there is no cause superior to these, no shadow of argument can be drawn from thence to affect this truth. One would think it were enough to engage *every* christian's attention, that it is so frequently assured in the gospel, that none who believe *that*, can doubt of the other. The mind of man naturally loves an object that *fills* it, *this* surely doth so; and we are in the highest degree *interested* in it. For what can more affect us, than the most illustrious and awful appearance of the Son of God, coming in the clouds of heaven, with his mighty angels, declaratively and finally to execute judgment upon *all*, to award salvation and destruction according to every one's works? Have we any more important subject to employ our thoughts? Was it not revealed to that very end? If we are not conversant therewith, how should we be influenced by it or prepared for it? And *upon that* supposition, what shall we *feel*, what will follow, from the terrors of that day?

Let us not banish the thought by telling ourselves, it is *at a great distance*, or plead that in excuse for our disregard: for that is *more* than we *know*. Since there is a day *appointed* for it, *our not knowing* the *precise* day and hour is

is but the exposing our folly in adjourning it SERM.
to ourselves to a *very* distant period. For how VI.
 can we pronounce *peremptorily* of any thing, ~
 concerning which we are *totally ignorant*?
 But though Christ's *actual* and *visible* appear-
 ance should be very distant, yet our own *death*
 is not so; and such as we are *then*, such shall
 we be found at his coming. As little as we
 are acquainted with the *time* of it, we are ac-
 quainted with this circumstance in the *manner*
 of it, that the day of the Lord shall come *as*
a thief in the night, that is, there will be no
warning by any thing extraordinary: no *ap-*
parent weakness in nature: but when it is
seemingly in its vigor, it will sicken and sink
 into ruin. 1 Thess. v. 2. All events of this
 kind, especially one *so* awful and tremendous
as this, are much the more formidable when
 they *do take place*, if under a general warning
 and assurance thereof, we mock or trifle, so as
 to make no preparation for it.

There was nothing in the *manner* of our
 Lord's *first* appearance, that should lead us to
expect such a second. But in the instituting the
 memorial of his death and passion, according
 to *the Apostle's account of it*, he designed to
 carry our eye *forward* as well as backward;
 or that we should carry his *coming again* in
our

SERM. our view, whilst we commemorate *his death*.

VI. It is true, our being required to shew our Lord's death *till he come*, is establishing it as a *perpetual* ordinance in the christian church. But then, methinks, from the *joining* these together in the Apostle's manner, there is a plain intimation that they should be united in our minds. The memorial of his death being to be kept up *till he come*, is equivalent to an assurance that *he will*. Every time therefore that we *remember him* under the circumstances of abasement for our sakes, as we do at a Sacrament *, we are led to *expect him* again in *another* character and form; and are at every such time to avow and confirm our expectations of that last and most solemn appearance. We remember him not as one *that is*, but as one who *was dead*, but is *now alive*; ascended far above all heavens; designing a return. As our sacramental acts in *particular*, so our lives *in general*, should carry in them a constant regard to *that day*: that way endeavouring to acquit ourselves to our great Lord through the whole of them; from whence we may not only expect, but, with the Apostle, *love* his appearing; or look *on* it, and *for* it, as a most desirable and refreshing prospect. 2 Tim. iv. 8.

To

* Preached on Sacrament-day.

To close: If we now truly receive Christ SERM.
Jesus, the Lord; if, through the influence VI.
and over the memorial of his love and pas-
sion, we sincerely avow our faith and trust
in him, engage for subjection to him, and
faithfully abide in him—When he shall ap-
pear a second time in the glory of his Fa-
ther, we may have a blissful confidence in
our Judge as our Advocate; and neither be
ashamed nor afraid before him at his coming.



SERMON



S E R M O N VII.



On the same SUBJECT.



HEBREWS ix. 28.

— *And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.*

THIS context speaks of a first and second SERM.
 appearance of the Son of God. The VII.
first we are told in verse 26, was in order to
put away sin, that is, to procure the remission
 of the guilt, and to deliver from the punish-
 ment of it, *by the sacrifice of himself*. The
 words I have *now* read expressly assure us of
another appearance of the same glorious per-
 sonage,

SERM. sonage, as yet future ; to which his *first* had
 VII. an evident respect in the counsels of heaven,
 and which ought to be taken in *as part* of a
 general scheme, designed to *terminate* in a ge-
 neral distribution of mankind to a final state
 of recompence, according to the improve-
 ment of advantages in a state of trial.

I have proposed to suggest some thoughts.

I. As to this appearance of the Son of God
 itself, with the declared *manner* of it. It is
 stiled his *second* appearance—And without sin
 —It is stiled a *second* appearance—As to this
 I observed to you, Upon the entrance of sin
 into the world, and its sad train of conse-
 quences, by the transgression of our first pa-
 rents, God was pleased to give *them* a promise,
 and through them to their descendants, of an
 extraordinary person who should repair the da-
 mage which was sustained through their com-
 pliance with the temptation of the devil. He
 was not indeed to appear *till* ages after ; but
 the virtue and efficacy of what he *should then*
 do *when* he came to give himself a sacrifice for
 sin, took place upon the promise. At length,
 and in the fulness of time, *he comes forth from*
 the Father, *into* the world, as the instructor
 and redeemer of the world ; in circumstances
 indeed of *abasement*, but which were such as
 his design required for the more effectual ac-
 complish-

complishment of it. This was his *first* appearance—But lo! he disappears, he leaves the world by death; but he rises from the dead, *as* and *when* he said he would, and goes to the father. John xvi. 28. He was taken up before the eyes of his disciples; a cloud conveyed him out of the sight of spectators: the heavens have received him; he is set down on the right hand of the majestic throne *there*; and our faith, hope, and trust must be in a Saviour *at present unseen*. 1 Pet. i. 8. So he will be, *till* the time fixed for the compleating or consummating of all things under his administration. But *then* he returns; *then* he will be revealed from heaven. Acts iii. 21.

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VII.

And this, the text tells us, is to be *without sin*. This expression is by no means to be understood *literally*. His *first* coming was as truly without the least taint or shadow of moral evil, as his *second can be*: he challenged his most inveterate enemies on this head. John viii. 46. The word *sin* here must stand, as it doth in other places, for a *sin-offering*. And then by his *appearing without sin*, the Apostle must mean, either that he would not come under that disguise of meanness and abasement, which he submitted to in pursuance of his *first* design, which was an instructor, reformer, and redeemer of mankind; or that he would not

SERM. offer himself again, nor appear a *second* time
 VII. to take away the sins of the world.—No, that
 advent shall be in pursuance of a very different
 design; and consequently he will appear in a
reverse form and manner, suitable to the dig-
 nity and majesty, which he shall sustain as
 judge. A character appointed for him; where-
 in he shall pronounce a final and compleat ab-
 solution; invest with a perfect redemption
 and salvation; which he hath purchased a
 right of *bestowing* upon those, *who look for his*
appearance.

This brings to the second thing I proposed
 to speak to.

II. The end and consequence of his second
 coming shall be, “to the salvation of those
 who look for him.”

In that day he shall be honoured as a *com-
 pleat* and *perfect* Saviour: making good that
 character in the highest sense, by fulfilling the
 promise, the *great* promise which he made, that
 of eternal life; justifying the faith and hope of
 those who depended upon him; and putting
 them into the *full* possession of that kingdom,
 which he assured them was *prepared for them.*
 Then shall the love and faithfulness of the
 great master, and the salvation of the faithful
 disciple, be revealed in its full glory. Then,
 with an extasy unknown at present, shall they
 breathe

breathe their triumphant acclamations, and their grateful ascriptions of salvation to him who sits on the throne, and to the lamb. Rev. SERM. VII.
vii. 10.

But who are these *distinguished* ones? Why, the text specifies them by this character; they are such as look for Christ's second appearance. To the consideration of this character I now proceed.

The *great* blessing of salvation, as all must esteem that of the gospel salvation to be, being assured to *such*, bespeaks *this* to be an *essential* ingredient in the christian character. As the true *Israelite* was described by his *waiting for the consolation of Israel*, or earnestly expecting the *first* appearance of the Messiah. Luke ii. 25—38. So the true christian seems distinguishedly characterized by his *looking* for the *second* coming of his Lord from heaven. Phil. iii. 20. "Our conversation, saith the Apostle is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." In 1 Thess. i. 9, 10, the *waiting for*, or expecting *Christ from heaven*, is specified as no less an evidence of an embracing the gospel, than the worshipping of the living God, in opposition to idolatry.

This character or behaviour, as it belongs to the christian, may be considered in three

SERM. views.—As a rational act—A religious one—
 VII. And as what is highly entertaining and delightful—I would enlarge somewhat under each.

First. The looking for Christ's *second* appearance from heaven, is in the christian a very *reasonable* act.

It is an event so *different* from what our minds are usually engaged with; so *vastly* transcending all that our eyes ever beheld, according to the gospel representation of it, as to appear quite *extravagant* and *imaginary* to those, whose minds are strangers to any ideas or apprehensions *above* the shifting scenes of the present world. These naturally, though very *unreasonably*, judge of the truth or falsehood of declarations, however attested, by what *they know* of the course of nature, and the circulation of human affairs. When any thing greater than what is common, or more awful than what they are acquainted with, is represented, it passes with them for pure fancy. The *futurity* also of this event, and the *uncertainty* of the *time*, *when* it shall take place, as to which we are in the dark, is worked up by many into an argument for the uncertainty of the *thing*, and as justifying them in a *disregard* and *contempt* of it. It is acknowledged, that Christ's *future* appearance

ance in the *manner*, and to the *ends*, which the christian is looking for, could not have been known but by revelation. But such is the evidence attending it now, that our belief and expectation, however firm and full, may be justified to ourselves ; and is to be justified by all the children of wisdom, how much soever it transcends all that we are acquainted with ; and under all our uncertainty *of the time*, when this tremendous scene shall take place. For,

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VII.

1. This event is most solemnly assured, and in words most full and express.

If we look no further than this context, the truth is represented in terms of as great certainty as it can be. Be pleased to read the foregoing verse with the text. " Forasmuch as it was a divine appointment that men should *once die*, and that afterwards judgment should take place ; in like manner is it a divine determination, that Christ being *once* offered to bear our sins, should appear a second time unto the salvation of those who look for him." The appointment of God, respecting our death, and an ensuing judgment, is equally to be applied to this future appearing of our Lord. The latter is equally fixed and certain as the former ; that is, as certain as a divine ordination can render it.

SERM. VII. How often did Christ himself declare it, in terms most strong and indisputable? Some of the passages have been already mentioned. But none who are acquainted with the gospel can be at a loss, or in doubt about it. And, since, when his future coming is mentioned, it is almost always declared to be for the executing the character and office of a judge, so whenever we read, as we frequently do, of his being judge, and having judgment committed to him, it is equally a declaration of the certainty of his second appearance. John v. 22, 26. We find this was given in charge to the Apostles by their Master, to preach and testify to the world, that Jesus was the person *ordained* of God to be *the judge* of quick and dead. Acts x. 42. Is not this equivalent to the declaration of the Angel, Acts i. 11. "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, come again, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." That *very person* who ascended then, should *descend again*; and in like manner too; that is, *visibly*, in a bright and shining cloud, which, as some think, and not improbably, was an host of Angels in their resplendent forms, from their numbers appearing as a cloud. His *first* advent, he said, "was not to judge but to save the world." John xii. 47. that is, he did
not

not come *then* to fix the eternal state of mankind; but to afford them means to reclaim them from their sins as in a state of trial; and that way to rescue them from the punishment due thereto. But then he adds in the next verse, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath that which will judge or condemn him: the word which I have taught and he hath rejected, that shall do it in the *last day*." as if he had said, If this my *first* coming, which is to seek and save, prove ineffectual to reclaim and amend through a contemptuous rejection, there is *another* appearance of mine, which shall be to judge, when the words I now speak, and the offers I now make, shall be to their everlasting condemnation.

Now a fact so frequently asserted in the gospel, must be esteemed, by those who believe the gospel, an *essential* article of faith: and they are abundantly justified in their regards to it, and expectation of it; since every branch of evidence confirming the truth of the gospel in general, is and must be equally a confirmation of this particular truth, which is so explicitly and fully declared therein. This leads me to another thing,

2. The looking for Christ's second appearance is a *rational* act, or what the christian is abundantly to be justified in, since, though it be

SERM. be a *future* event, and vastly *surpasseth* every
 VII. thing which we are acquainted with, yet it is
 { *equally certain* with Christ's resurrection, which
 is already past.

It is true; the resurrection of Christ from the dead is the general standing confirmation of his being what he said he was, the Son of God, the Prophet and Messenger from heaven; the Messiah, the King and Saviour of the world. Now that which establishes these his publick characters, of course equally confirms the truth *of all* that he *declared* and *revealed* to the world. If he was a true prophet he could not deliver a false doctrine, and whatever he said of himself must be true. And what stronger evidence could be given of his being a true prophet, than his rising from the dead, after he had been crucified and slain? But though this be a general proof of *all* and *every* thing which Christ taught and assured, yet the Apostle particularly specifies it in confirmation of Christ's second coming. Acts xvii. 31. "That Christ will come again to judge the world, God, saith he, hath given assurance to all men, or an abundant reason to believe, *in that he hath raised him from the dead.*" Not that there is any *natural* connection between Christ's resurrection, and his future appearance; or that his coming again is a *natural*

tural and *immediate* consequence of his resur- SERM.
rection from the dead. He might, to be sure, VII.
have risen again, and never more have appeared
in this world. But the christian is hereby *di-*
rected to look upon his Lord's second coming,
as a truth of *equal* certainty with his resurrec-
tion. That he *would* return, he *again* and
again declared before he died, when he professed
to speak as a *divine* prophet; by his being
raised from the dead by a divine power, God
hath as solemnly sealed *that* his declaration,
as we can suppose omnipotence and truth *it-*
self to do it.

What then though it be a *future* event, and
vastly exceeds all that we were ever acquainted
with, the christian's expectation of it is as
reasonable as any that he can indulge. For,
allowing the Gospel representation of it to be
ever so great and marvellous, yet here is *evi-*
dence as great and marvellous, even his rising
from the dead. Evidence it is, when con-
sidered, sufficient to support *any* event which
is grounded upon it, that carries no contra-
diction or impossibility in it; which none
can say is in *any* degree a circumstance in the
case before us.

3. The christian's belief and expectation of
his Lord's second appearance is rational and
well-grounded, in that he hath been found a
true

SERM. true prophet *hitherto*; and that all events fore-
 VII. told by him to take place at distant times,
 { have most punctually answered his predic-
 tions.

He foretold his own treatment, death, and resurrection; and that with many *minute* circumstances as to the process and the manner: that he should be *betrayed*, referring therein to an act of one of his own disciples; that he should be immediately delivered into the hands of the chief priests and scribes; that *they* should deliver him to the Gentiles or to the Roman power for execution; that the soldiers should insult and vilify him; and then put him to death; and that on *the third day* he would rise again. Matt. xx. 18, 19. He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem near forty years before it took place; with that exactness of circumstances, that it looked more like an history of what was *past*, than a prophecy of what was *to come*. He promised the Apostles to pour out extraordinary gifts upon them after his ascension, when he was under circumstances that could give them very little ground to expect it, which was verified to the surprize of every beholder. He again and again assured them of the very extensive and speedy propagation of the gospel, amidst the most inveterate prejudices and rage of the world against
 it

it—These and other predictions he gave out, SERM. VII.
 every one of which came to pass *to a tittle*,
 which prophane as well as sacred history attests. }
 Now would not the wisest and most thinking
 part of mankind, deem it a most *reasonable*
 thing to believe and expect the accomplish-
 ment of any *future* event, however *uncommon*
 if not absurd, that was foretold and assured by
one, who *had*, at several times and in various
 instances, *made good his word*? when not *one*
 of them, no not a *circumstance* had *bitberto*
 failed, though the cases were more unlikely to
human appearance to come to pass, than that
eminent event which is yet to be fulfilled.

Since then he hath most expressly and so-
 lemnly assured us, that he will come again in
 the quality of the judge of the world, and in
 circumstances of glory, power, and majesty,
 answerable to his tremendous character, hath
 not the christian all the reason in the world to
 look for *this* coming and *this* appearance? It
 is indeed a *future* event; and one that infinite-
 ly surpasses the measure of human things and
 human thoughts. We never were acquainted
 with any thing that could be stiled the *image*
 or *resemblance* of it. But what then? Hath
he left it on record as a *certain* event, who
 hath given out a variety of predictions in times
 past, *every one* of which have been most cri-
 tically

SERM. tically and to an iota fulfilled; of which there
 VII. were no more signs *at the time* of assurance,
 { than there are *now* of his second appearance?
 Surely then, as christians, we *are* in the highest degree justified to ourselves, and to be justified by all the reasonable part of the world, in our firm and unshaken expectations of the punctual accomplishment of *this* declaration, That the Son of man, even Jesus who was crucified, shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, attended with inconceivable ensigns of his character, as coming for judgment, even with those of the dissolution of nature and a burning world.

Upon such grounds as I have mentioned, the christian rests his faith and expectation of this tremendous event, fully perswaded his Lord will appear again, *as he said he would*. He is *now* indeed called to believe in, and love one he *never yet saw*. *This* from the evidences he hath of his *first* coming, with the God-like design of mercy, pity, and salvation, which he came upon, he doth not find it *hard* to do. 1 Pet. i. 8. But he goes further; and in reliance on the solemn declarations of one who hath proved himself beyond all suspicion, *the* true and faithful witness, he believes he shall *behold* him; and lives in the prospect and *hope* too, that *his* eye shall see him appearing
 even

even amidst ensigns of terror, to his own everlasting joy—But

SERM.
VII.

Secondly, As the christian's looking for the second appearance of his Saviour and Lord is a reasonable, it is equally a *religious* act.

So far as it is founded on his Masters testimony, it is so. But it still *further* merits that character, in respect of its natural influences upon the mind and life. The nature of the thing, and its obvious consequences; with the christian's own near *concern* therein, would sadly impeach his understanding, was he only to look upon it as a *speculation*. If my Lord will certainly come again, and come in the character, and, to that end, with the circumstances which he hath declared, can I answer it *to myself* as a reasonable creature, or *to him* as an accountable one, should I look for what is so solemn and awful, as a *common* event? Or when my interest in it is so immediate, so important, should I be a stranger to the thought, or be unimpressed by the thing? Can I really believe and expect it, without feeling great solicitude in my heart about it? Those to whose *salvation* he will appear, are characterised by their looking for him. Is not this a distinguishing character, describing the *real*, in contradistinction to the nominal christian? Scripture all along speaks to us as to *reasonable* creatures: conse-

SERM. consequently when it speaks of our *looking* for
 VII. *such* an event as we know Christ's second appearance will be, it cannot but mean, the expecting it in such a manner as reason would lead us to. And what can that be, but such a one as is accompanied with a *preparation* for it? And wherein doth this lye? But through the faith thereof to renounce all ungodliness and worldly lusts, aspiring after the greatest purity and perfection, in an holy and heavenly life? In securing those dispositions and habits of mind, which are at the foundation of a blessed immortality? In an entire devotedness to him as my Lord, who will then be my judge? And in keeping myself in the love of God, from whence I may look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life? Jude 21. This is the Apostle's representation of the true christian's expectation of this event. 2 Pet. iii. 11. &c. "Seeing then that all these things," viz. the visible heavens and earth, "shall be dissolved," in that great and terrible day of the Lord, "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness;" *looking for* and *hasting* the preparation for the coming of the day of God. Beloved, seeing ye look for such things, *be diligent* that ye may be found of him in peace, or be so far *without spot, and blameless*, that
 ye

ye may not be ashamed before him at his coming." To this conduct of care and diligence should this our prospect lead us. And when it *thus* influences it is a religious act: we are from hence more *disposed* to look for it; and from thence to advance in our *preparation* for it: to be able to stand in the day when Christ who is the christian's life shall appear; and to triumph and rejoice in it as a coming to our salvation. SERM. VII.

This would bring me to consider it in the third view I proposed, viz. as what is highly entertaining and delightful. But that with other things I must defer.

I shall close at present with one important reflection.

We may see, and should remember from what hath been said, what that faith in Christ, and in the doctrines of the Gospel is, which will be followed by the happy consequences annexed to it.

Christ *himself*, in his personal and public characters, in his offices, design, and work, is much the subject of the Gospel revelation. And the very first thing required of us, as the foundation of every thing in christianity, is a firm persuasion of the truth of what the Gospel testifies concerning him.

SERM. The *particular* to which the text refers, is
 VII. *his coming again* as the final arbiter of the
 state of mankind. And what is required of
 us with respect to this very awful event is,
 that we *look for it*. Now allowing that this
 is an expression equivalent to a firm persuasion
 of its *truth* and *certainty*, yet who that consi-
 ders the very *nature* of the *event* can imagine,
 that a *bare assent* of the mind thereto, is *all*
 which a faith thereof implies? It is evident
 that the *salvation* annexed thereto is a *special*
 and *distinguishing* favour. And when the
 blessing is *peculiar*, can the character to which
 it is annexed be *general*, or the *condition common*?
 It cannot be. On the contrary it is evident,
 that the belief of this truth *must be* such a one,
 as impresses the mind, and influences the con-
 duct and life of the christian, agreeable to the
 nature and importance of the truth, and his
 great concern in it. Every one must see, that
 this second coming of our Lord, as judge, *this*
day of God, as the Apostle expresses it, hath
 a *natural* influence, if really believed, upon
 our *practical* regards to it, or our *preparation*
 for it. In what *but this* consists the difference
 between those who *look for it*, and those who
scoff at it? Indeed no professed infidel can
 throw that reflection on the gospel, that those
 professed friends do, who *avowing* its very
 awful

awful and affecting truths, *live* no way answerably to a faith in the son of God. SERM.
VII.

He hath required us to *remember* him, which bespeaks him to be *absent*. Nay the manner in which he hath required us to remember him, is a representation of him under circumstances of great *abasement*, even as *crucified* and *slain*. His *love to us* indeed shone hereby with the strongest ray; but *his own glory and dignity* was at the same time greatly eclipsed. However, we are directed and encouraged, *whilst* we are commemorating his death, to carry our view to a *widely different* scene; even to that of his *resurrection* and *ascension*, by which the validity of his mediation, and our hopes in him as a Saviour, are indisputably established.

May our celebration * of his *death* in the manner he hath prescribed, be accompanied with a faith in his *resurrection*, and of his assured *return*. The memorial of his love to us exhibited in the sacrament, is very comfortable. But the *honour* of his love will be greatly enhanced by the *splendour* of his *future* appearance, and the *worth* of it demonstrated beyond our present conception, when he shall come on purpose to *confer* the *ultimate* effect of his transcendent benevolence to us. We are happy now in proportion to the strength of

N 2

our

* Preached on Sacrament day.

SERM. *our faith* in him; but it will rise to a *triumph*

VII. when it is exchanged for *vision*; when the
personal appearance of our Redeemer shall
swallow up every memorial of him, and pro-
claim the reasonableness and wisdom of our
hope in him, by the surprizing accomplish-
ment of our most raised expectations from
him. May we so evidence our love to him
now, that though we see him not at present,
yet being *sure we shall*, we may rejoice with
a joy unspeakable, resembling that which is
truly glorious.



S E R M O N



S E R M O N V I I I .



On the same SUBJECT.



HEBREWS ix. 28.

— *And unto them that look for him will he appear a second time, without sin, unto salvation.*

FROM these words I have proposed to SERM. consider that *future* coming of the Son VIII. of God, to which his first appearance had a respect in the design of God; and which was part of that scheme, the divine wisdom and goodness contrived for mankind; putting them first upon their trial; and adjudging them at last to that state, to which, by the law

SERM. law of sincerity, and the covenant of repent-
VIII. ance, they should be entitled.

I proposed to suggest some thoughts.

I. As to the appearance itself, with the declared manner of it,

It is stiled Christ's *second* appearance. He was very early promised to the world, and, in a dependance thereon, he was long expected under the character of him *that should come*. At length in the fulness of time, in the *fittest* as well as the appointed season, he actually came, as the Prophet of God; and, having fulfilled his ministry, he submits himself to death; gives his life in testimony of the truth he delivered, and, in obedience to his Father's will, as a ransom for the sins of the world. Thus he came forth from the Father, and came into the world. This was his *first* appearance. But then he disappears by death. But lo! he rises from the dead *as*, and *when*, he said he would: and having sufficiently satisfied some hundreds of the truth thereof, he leaves the world and goes to the Father. But though gone into the heavens, he will *appear again*, and be *revealed from thence*. And this the text tells us is to be *without sin*. The word sin here must stand, as it doth in several other places, for a *sin-offering*. This way he was *once* offered, but it should

should be *but once* : his second appearance should carry a *very different aspect* ; it shall be under widely *different circumstances*, and for *very different ends*. Matt. xxv. 31, 32. — I then

SERM.
VIII.

II. Considered the particular end and consequence of this appearance as to *some*, who are here described.

The end is, for *salvation*. And *they* to whom it shall prove so, are such as *look for him*. This character or act I told you might be considered in three views, with respect to the real christian.—As *a reasonable* act, or what the christian hath the highest reason for. And, as such, his looking for him implies, a full and firm persuasion of the truth, that Christ will *most certainly* come again. And in this persuasion, be it ever so strong, he can justify himself, and is to be justified by all the children of wisdom, since this truth is most fully and expressly *revealed*—since it is as certain as Christ's resurrection which is past—and since *every other* event foretold by him to take place in time past, hath most *punctually* and *critically* answered to his predictions.

But then the christian's looking for his Saviour from heaven is also a *religious* act : so far as it is built on a divine testimony, it is so ; but more especially it is so, in respect of its influences

SERM. on the heart and life, by rendering both of
 VIII. such a tenor, as to be a *preparation* for it, in
 producing such dispositions and habits of the
 mind as are at the foundation of that blessed
 immortality, which he comes to invest his fol-
 lowers *fully* in.

But then there is a third view now to be
 considered, in which the real christian may be
 said to look for the future coming of his Ma-
 ster, Saviour, and Judge, and that is,

Thirdly, As what is highly *entertaining* and
delightful.

And thus his looking for it is a *wishing* and
longing for it, as the most *desirable* prospect.
 This the Apostle gives, not only as the po-
 sture of his own mind with respect to this
 event, but as common to the christian cha-
 racter; or to those who firmly believe and are
 duly prepared for it, that they *love* his appear-
 ing. 2 Tim. iv. 8. Now the workings of love
 as to a *future* and *distant* object, we know is
 by *desire*. That way doth the christian's love
 display itself as to *this* solemn and awful event.
 He hears and believes his Saviour when he
 saith, *Surely I come*; and can with full spirit
 and great satisfaction echo thereto, *Even so*
come Lord Jesus.

Not that the christian's pleasing hopes and
 delightful expectations of an heavenly bliss, are
 alto-

altogether to be confined to his Saviour's *second* SERM. appearance ; or that he hath no foundation for VIII. them *till* that season. I can by no means be-
lieve that the soul falls into a state of insensibility and inactivity, as the body doth, at death ; and that the soul becomes senseless as the body ; falling asleep with that ; not to awake till the body shall be raised : whereby every pleasing prospect as to felicity and enjoyment during that intermediate time is cut off, and we have nothing but a long night of darkness and death before us in respect of the *soul* as well as the body, till the morning of the resurrection. Were this the doctrine of scripture, or did it appear so *to me*, I should acquiesce therein ; since the original powers and capacity of the soul were the free gift of God, and consequently the degree, the continuance and limitation of their exercise most indisputably depends upon his own wisdom and good pleasure, in opposition to any obligations he can be under to us, or any claims we can have upon him. But as I apprehend there is no force nor consequence in many of the arguments that the writers of the New Testament use, upon the supposition, that the soul falls asleep and awakes not but with the resurrection of the body, so, on the contrary, I cannot but think, that, *upon* the dissolution of its union
with

SERM. with the body, in its separate state, it is in a
 VIII. circumstance of activity, of suffering, or of
 enjoyment, suitable to its own nature of conscious thought, and reflection; and in a much more *enlarged* degree than ever it was, whilst in union with this gross oppressive partner. If this be the truth, then the *real* christian hath a very supporting and comfortable prospect *on this side* the second appearance of his Saviour; I mean, *that* into which death will *immediately* introduce *him*: for then he may assure himself, that, "when absent from the body, he shall be present with the Lord." 2 Cor. v. 8: "that to die, even from the most desirable state and circumstances in this world, will be *gain*:" "that to depart from this world is to exchange unspeakably for the better, as it is to be with Christ." Phil i. 21, 23.

But though the christian may look for *this* event, and extract a great deal of comfort from his prospect at the *end of life*, yet there is *much more* to look and long for at the *end of the world*. His Saviour's coming in the sense he doth *at death*, may make his *heart glow*, from what may *then* be *expected*. But there is ground of much *greater* triumph in his *coming to judgment*; as there are several things he is told will accompany it, and concur to render it the season for the *perfecting* and *compleating* his blessedness.

To

To offer an hint or two.

SERM.

VIII.

The *visible lustre* and *god-like majesty* of the Saviour's appearance, will minister to the pleasure and triumph of his saved ones.

The more eminently he is represented as the visible image of the invisible God, and is so declared by the external solemnity and glory with which he is surrounded, the greater *honour* and *rapture* must *they* share in, for whose acquittance and acknowledgment he thus publicly appears. The glorious title he sustains, the royalty of his state and retinue, reflects a glory on his disciples and friends, and inspires them with sentiments of joy, love, wonder, and adoration. The solemnity will not damp or terrify *them*; but open a *distinct* spring of pleasure in their breasts; assured that he comes "to present *them* as faultless before the presence of his Father's glory." Jude, verse 24. Why may not this be admitted as an eminent sense of that place? 2 Thess. i. 10. "In that day, referring to Christ's second appearance, he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe?" I say, why may not this be an *eminent* sense of this place? That his saints shall then glory in him; triumph in his honours, and that way give glory to him; making their humble adoring boasts of him: Lo! this is he, *the* Lord, *the* Saviour!

SERM. viour ! We trusted it was *he* that *should* re-
 VIII. deem and save us, and would bestow eternal
 life upon us : now, now, we *see* it is so ! he
 cometh, he cometh to judge the earth ! and
 to put *us* into the full possession of the king-
 dom ! His glory must enhance the dignity
 and worth of his friendship ; must awaken
 and employ every nobler passion ; and mini-
 ster an unknown delight. For, *such* as *he* is,
such are his friends and followers for honour
 and dignity in their measure. They are re-
 presented as breathing their Hallelujahs in the
 open air, and repeating their glad acclama-
 tions of "salvation to him that sits on the
 throne and to the Lamb ; now is come sal-
 vation and strength, the kingdom of our
 God, and the power of his Christ." Rev. xii.
 10. The more worthy he appears of uni-
 versal adoration, the greater honour, and the
 richer satisfaction is there, in his applauses and
 smiles.

Further : Another thing accompanying the
 second appearance of Christ is, the resurrection
 of the body, with the qualities we are assured
 will belong to those of the just ; This renders
 the looking for that appearance a *delightful*
 act.

The soul depends not on the body for its
 power of acting, though many of its sensati-
 ons

ons at present are derived from bodily organs. SERM.
 But on the contrary I must at present think, VIII.
 that it will be enabled to act much more desirably and suitably to itself than *now* it can for any continuance, when it shall be in a state of *separation* from *this* body. Nevertheless, I believe its most *perfect* state both for action and enjoyment, will be from its union with a *resurrection* body: one that is framed and fashioned by the most perfect model, even that of our Saviour's glorified one, 3 Phil. 21. and every way suited to the spirits of the just when they are made fully perfect. This is always spoken of as our ultimate advancement in the perfection of our natures, and in our capacity for blessedness. And we can easily suppose, from what we know and find in *this* earthly tabernacle, that when we shall bear the image of the heavenly Adam in our *spiritual* bodies, the sources of satisfaction will be more numerous and strong, than in an unbodied state. If it were not so, a *spiritual* body would not have been the matter of a distinguishing promise to the christian; nor would he have been directed and led, to have triumphed in the hope of it, as the *compleating* of his capacity for happiness, or as the season of his perfection. Yes, O christian, when thy Saviour comes again, as he assuredly will, he comes

SERM. comes amongst other ends to raise the dead;
 VIII. to command the grave to deliver up its prey;
 ~~~~~ to change thy *vile* body, or that which was  
 suited to the state of thy *humiliation*, and was  
 a standing mark of thy degeneracy and guilt.  
 Amongst the rest, thy own entombed dissolv-  
 ed body shall hear his voice or summons and  
 shall come forth; *not as* it was laid in the  
 grave, nor with the disadvantageous qualities  
 that *then* attended it, from whence thou wast  
 a sufferer so many ways: No; *they* shall be  
 left behind; whilst thy body itself shall be  
 raised, exquisitely wrought and tempered to  
 minister to thy soul in its *advanced* state; and  
 from thence termed a *spiritual* body: not only  
 qualified to share in but even to *contribute* to  
 the joys of immortality, which from the union  
 and perfection of thy *entire* person, thou shalt  
 be capacitated for, and admitted to enjoy in  
 their full perfection: which cannot be be-  
 fore.

Again, The second appearance of Christ is  
 a very delightful contemplation, in that it is  
 the season of the general assembly of holy  
 and happy souls; who have been in all gene-  
 rations, or shall be to the end of time, reco-  
 vered by divine grace from the apostasy; and  
 who in nature and qualities are the children,  
 and of the family of God.

Then



Then is the *universal* convention of the body of Christ: then shall all the members be gathered together. The spirits of those, whose *bodies* shall then be sleeping in the dust, will Christ bring with him, and unite to their own bodies, which he will then raise. Other members of the family and household of God we are assured, shall be *found alive* at his coming. These shall not *die*; they shall not be unclothed, or divested of their bodies by the separation that death makes between soul and body. But *they* shall be *changed*: their corruptible bodies shall in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, become incorruptible, and their mortal become immortal. The power that calls the dead to life, can and will instantaneously change the living; and changed they *must* be, for flesh and blood, or this present gross, animal, corruptible body, cannot inherit the incorruptible eternal kingdom of God. It is no way suited to that state. But those who are *alive* at Christ's appearance being first transformed, and invested with the same kind of spiritual, incorruptible, and glorious bodies that the *dead* in Christ shall be *raised* with, they shall be *caught up* in the clouds of heaven to meet their common Lord and Saviour in the air. Read and consider at your leisure 1 Cor. xv. 51—54. 1 Thess. iv. 14—17.

Thus

SERM. Thus shall all the children of God at the  
 VIII. coming of their Saviour be in the fullest manner gathered together, who till that time will be scattered abroad—Methinks the christian should often find a rising wish of being alive at his Lord's appearance; or that that coming might be in his day. It is a most desirable circumstance amidst all the terrors of it, from the privilege of being exempted absolutely from the sting of death, from all the fear, trouble, and pain of dying, and from the conquest of the grave, when mortality shall not only as now be *succeeded* by life, but at *once swallowed up* of it. For to *their* change do those expressions relate. 1 Cor. xv. 55. 2 Cor. v. 4. But this is a desire to be left with God.

There is nothing, I believe, that ministers so sensible a pleasure to the *real thorough* christian in his present pilgrimage, next to his converse with his Maker, and his own personal acceptance with him, as the *society* of fellow-christians; of those who are of one heart; and as to every thing *material* of one mind: who are embarked in the same cause; listed under the same standard and leader, children of the same father; members of the same body; and travelling to the same country. Though he should *know* but a few of these,

yet



yet the *hope* that there *are many* more than he SERM.  
 knowes, yields an high satisfaction. Now, VIII.  
 must it not be matter of *transport* to have the  
 expectation of beholding a numberless multi-  
 tude of such, all of them far surpassing any  
 upon earth in those engaging circumstances  
 and relations? To behold the *whole* family  
*together* both in heaven and earth. The spirits  
 of those who *once dwelt in flesh* made perfect,  
 celebrating their own safe arrival at home,  
 united, to and received into full communion with,  
 the higher intelligences who never inhabited  
 flesh. Is there a real joy now in the breast of a  
 christian upon the *conversion* of a single sinner,  
 upon the *addition* of one *single* soul to the  
 worshippers of God, to the disciples of Jesus,  
 to the interest of piety, righteousness, purity,  
 truth and love, which is the kingdom God  
 hath set up in the world, and upon the prospect  
 of there being *one more* heir of the kingdom  
 of glory? How surpassing a delight must fill  
 the breast of every such one, when, as at the  
 appearance of their Lord, they shall behold  
 the *many*, the *multitude*, of the children of  
 God, brought to glory *together*? making their  
 solemn appearance *at once*, gathered at times  
 from the east, from the west, the north and  
 the south, and sitting down *together*, in the  
 kingdom of God? Surely, the honour, glory  
 VOL. II. O and

SERM. and felicity of the whole body, when collected and compleated, cannot but reflect strongly upon *each*, from their near and strong affection one to another !

Further, The believing view and expectation of Christ's second appearance will be very *delightful* to the real christian, as it will be the *accomplishment of all* the designs of wisdom, grace and love, that have been carrying on through the successive ages of the world.

Next to the christian's *personal* salvation, there is nothing he is now so solicitous about, and could extract such a pleasure from, as the general prevalency of the fear, love, and service of God in an apostate world : as the universal reign and rule of the Redeemer in the souls of men ; which in its very frame and tendency is directed to lead mankind to God, and to state them in eternal blessedness. Must not then that season be highly entertaining, of which the christian hath the certain prospect ; when the divine authority shall be universally acknowledged ; the divine rights and claims take place and be consented to ; when the grace of God and the Redeemer shall be triumphant in their blessed issue and success ? When the ends of the Saviour's glorious achievements, surprising condescension, and amazing love shall be attained ? *This is the day*



day for the solemn triumph, upon the finishing of all God's works of wonder and grace for the salvation of mankind. And may it not be foreseen by the christian as a day, when from the principles of love, and loyalty to his God and Saviour, he shall join with an obsequious throng of *celestial grateful* creatures, in triumph for the glorious accomplishments of such desirable ends? Then shall those new heavens and new earth, that universally new state of things take place, wherein *nothing but* righteousness shall dwell.

SERM.  
VIII.

Finally, The looking for Christ's second appearance is an act highly delightful to the real christian, as that is the season for the *perfecting* of his blessedness.

When the holy soul is separated from the body, and *whilst* it is so, we are assured it is *present with the Lord*; an expression that is used to describe the state of blessedness *after* the resurrection, 1 Thess. iv. 17. This to me is a *plain* declaration, that such a soul in a state of *separation* is not asleep, but really in a state of positive happiness, and that the happiness *before* and *after* the resurrection is the same for *kind*; or otherwise sure, the *same* expression would not be used to describe *both*. But at the same time it is certain, that the state of spirits said to be *made perfect*, is not *absolutely* and

SERM. *compleatly so* till the appearance of Christ as  
 VIII. judge. *That* is the *more eminent* season, we are  
 assured: though he who brought life and immortality to light hath not been pleased to tell us, what addition shall *then* be made to what was enjoyed *before*. The christian as he withdraws by death, is put into possession of what truly deserves the name of heaven; but he is not invested in the *full* and *compleat* possession, till Christ shall come again. He shall *at death* have a portion according to the *nature* of his works, but not according to the *degree* of them, *till a judgment-day*. The *full* accomplishment of the great gospel promise, eternal life, shall be at the general assembly of the saints of God, when they as by publick sentence shall be solemnly adjudged thereto; and presented as faultless before the father with exceeding joy. It is the *resurrection* of the just, that is the time affixed by promise for their *consummate* blessedness. The manifestations of the divine love will then, tis highly probable, be stronger, the enjoyment more sensible, the faculties more enlarged, the employments more noble, and the state more advanced in point of blessedness. When the Mediator shall resign his kingdom, which he shall do when the ends of it are attained, and shall resume his last character as judge, then, his faithful followers being solemnly



lemnly assembled, he will execute that his SERM.  
last office, and put them in the full possession VIII.  
of his own purchase; or of what as a Saviour  
he merited by his death as a grant to himself,  
and intended for them in a way of reward.  
For the *full* blessedness of the redeemed, is  
the *Redeemer's* joy: well then may it be the  
*christians*; and upon that account well may  
their Lord's second appearance be a *delightful*  
expectation, since *that* is the season when he  
will solemnly invest them in the *whole* of that  
bliss he hath purchased for them; whilst he  
will rejoice over them with joy, and they shall  
enter into *his*.

I shall close this discourse and subject, by  
two or three reflections.

1st Reflect. How unspeakable an advantage  
hath the real christian of all others, be his  
circumstances what they will.

As to their condition in *this* life, as it is re-  
gulated and ordered by the providence of God,  
and intended for their *tryal*, they *seem* upon a  
*level* with the rest of mankind: They are  
liable to the same wants and the same pres-  
sures. They are involved in perplexities and  
troubles as others are; and sometimes it is  
seen that they are under greater sufferings than  
some of a very contrary character; and that  
the latter do, to an eye of sense, and in respect

SERM. of this life, prosper more than they. But even  
VIII. *here*, if it were my present subject, I think I  
could demonstrate to you that tho' there may  
be an *equality* of *outward circumstance* between  
the real christian and others, yea, tho' others  
should have the *advantage* of him therein, yet  
that in *those* cases he hath *great advantage* of  
all others in point of *happiness*. But to wave  
this, and to keep to what is before us. The  
three most awful and tremendous events, which  
can be the subject of the human mind, are  
death, judgment, and Christ's second appearance;  
which are in the closest connection and de-  
pendance one upon another. These are common  
to all, there can be no exemption; and they are  
to be *expected* by all as the greatest certainties  
in the world. Now as to these events there  
is a very wide difference between the christian  
and others in point of advantage, arising from  
the difference in their characters: and that both  
in respect of the things themselves when they  
shall take place, and their apprehensions or  
the working of their minds under the expecta-  
tion of them. Scripture represents the coming  
of Christ to judgment, by images the most  
awful and striking of any that we are ac-  
quainted with. The greatest solemnity that  
we have a conception of seems to be that of  
a great prince upon his throne, designedly dis-  
playing



playing majesty, power and grandeur, by the several ensigns of it, encircled by his nobles and courtiers and numerous attendants; in person sitting as upon life and death, on a multitude convened before him. But how much more august are the scripture representations of the future coming of the son of man, or of the Messias? from the specified circumstances which are wholly out of the way of all natural causes, and of which our experience or the history of the world cannot furnish us with any *images*. From the *design* of his coming *with* these circumstances, that event is stiled, and justly too, "the terror of the Lord." 2 Cor. 5. 11. or what may strike the human mind with the strongest impressions of terror under the apprehension of it. Awful it may and will, in a degree beyond conception, be to *all*; but the true christian may without *amazement* or terror contemplate it in all its circumstances. He may from *choice*, and under the fullest persuasion of its truth, represent to himself, the heavens opening, and a visible judge descending from thence, distinguished with all the external brightness, glory, and greatness of a Deity; with a glory far surpassing the sun in its greatest radiancy; attended by the several orders of angels and archangels; the nobles, if I may so term them, of his vast

SERM. and boundless empire ; a multitude without  
 VIII. number, in their glorious forms : summoning  
 { earth and seas to deliver up their dead ; a summons that shall pierce the inmost caverns, and shall gather all nations to him : An appearance accompanied with lightnings and thundrings ; and an angel assuring by him who liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer : the quaking mountains, the darkened heavens, the veiled sun, and the convulsion and disorder of all external nature, confessing the approaching God, presaging the dissolution of the present frame, and the expiration of the world.

This awful and striking representation, I say, the true christian may fully believe, and keep before his own eyes, *without amazement*. And since there *will* be such a scene, tho' infinitely *more* awful than his conceptions or imagination can reach, hath he not an unspeakable advantage of all others, to whom it must be the source of an inexpressible terror ? He can look and *long* for it too ; whilst the very *apprehensions* of it fill others with *trembling* : It is the object of his *hope* and a *cheering* prospect, whilst to others it is the matter of *fearful* expectation. And this advantage as to the disposition of the christian's *mind* under the *apprehension* of it is founded on a much greater one, resulting



sulting from the *event itself*: For, this glorious Lord and Judge appears for *their* salvation, whilst it is to take vengeance on all that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus, that is, the *practical* infidels in the christian world. It is for the triumphant admiration of his saints in his favour and love; but for the manifestation of his glorious power in the everlasting destruction of others, 2 Thess. i. 7. 10. SERM. VIII.

O the inconceivable difference that the dread *solemnity* of the common Judge's appearance will make in the minds of the beholders, in respect of the passions, and the degree of consternation that it will excite! When he cometh in the clouds of heaven *every* eye shall see him. But we are assured many in the bitterness of their anguish and despair "shall call to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," Rev. vi. 16. not only those who pierced and crucified him at Jerusalem, but those who by their prophaneness and hard speeches, their apostacy from his religion, and their *real* infidelity *under the profession of it*, have as it were "crucified him again, and have exposed him to infamy." Heb vi. 6. But how inconceivably preferable is thy circumstance, O christian, who canst extract  
sweet

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 VIII. number, in their glorious forms : summoning  
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SERM. sweet peace, an heavenly hope and humble  
 VIII. joy even from the blazing glory, the royal  
 celestial guards, the appearance of the throne,  
 the spreading lightning, the roaring thunder,  
 and the dissolving world ; as these are but the  
*attendants of his* approach, who comes as *thy*  
*Saviour*, when he comes as thy Judge ! The  
 ensigns of his magnificence, power and hea-  
 venly commission to execute the most solemn  
 office, are thy greater *security* for the *bliss* thou  
 art hoping for. They do but proclaim the  
 wisdom of thy choice, the validity of thy  
 faith and trust, and the grandeur of thy re-  
 lation : For safe thou art amidst the flames of  
 fire, and crash of worlds ; and with the great-  
 er splendor thy Saviour appears, the more is  
 thine honour, and thine happiness assured : and  
 in the contemplation of his glory, art thou pre-  
 sented with a prospect of thine own.

2d Reflect. If Christ should appear at last  
 to our *destruction*, we must be absolutely in-  
 excusable and self-condemned.

And the reason is ; *that* consequence must  
 be owing to our *disbelief* or *disregard* of this  
 established truth, and very awful event, “ that  
 Christ will come again in the clouds of hea-  
 ven, in power and great glory.” Nothing in its  
*own nature* can be more forcibly engaging of  
 a reasonable mind, upon supposition of its  
 truth, than this. And who that believes the  
 gospel



gospel can doubt of this solemn day, which SERM.  
is so frequently assured and displayed in such VIII.  
strong terms and lively colours? Why was it  
revealed and emphatically stiled, *the* day, and  
*that* day, but to declare the distinguished *mo-*  
*ment* and *importance* of it, and the regard  
that we ought to pay thereto? 2. Tim. iv. 8.  
And what regard can be paid thereto, *answer-*  
*ing* any way to the reality and nature of the  
truth, but as it is made a *standing* motive to  
a religious and holy life? It is recorded for our  
attention, and described by images which par-  
ticularly strike the human mind, that it may  
be applied to as a *dissuasive from evil*, which  
would render that great day of the Lord, a  
terrible day to us; that we may attend to it  
for our quickning under our indifferency, tri-  
fling and loiterings in the christian race; for  
our comfort and spring under a consciousness  
of the sincerity and faithfulness of our endea-  
vours to answer gospel grace, in our denying,  
or practical renouncing, all ungodliness and  
worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously,  
and godly in this present world: on which  
the looking for the blessed hope, even the glo-  
rious appearance of the great God, and our  
Saviour the Lord Jesus, hath a very powerful  
influence. Tit. ii. 11. 13. There is nothing  
in the scripture account of things, romantic  
and visionary; nothing beyond the truth and  
life,

SERM. life, tho' some things are beyond our present  
 VIII. conceptions, as they vastly surpass every thing  
 we are conversant with. This day of the  
 Lord is one of those ; this scene will infinitely  
 exceed all our present sentiments, and all that  
 imagination can now suggest. But sure, no  
 reasonable person will say, or can think, that  
 every thing is romantic that is beyond the pet-  
 ty scenes of this little world.

Let me prevail upon all to be more conver-  
 sant with this glorious scene : that we may ex-  
 perience its influence according to its design,  
 and apply it to ourselves as our circumstances  
 require. Frequent thoughts of this *pleasing,*  
*dreadful* solemnity, would go a great way to-  
 wards the discernment of our true interest, to-  
 wards the fixing our chief end, the determi-  
 ning our resolutions; and contribute to our sted-  
 fastness under tryals. It would excite us to a  
 daily observation and amendment of our er-  
 rors ; raise us above the fears and flatteries of  
 the world ; inspire noble passions and noble  
 designs ; and preserve us from being ashamed  
 of our Saviour, or a disgrace to him. And  
 now, if this truth, so important, so influential  
 upon our highest happiness both here and here-  
 after, should be heard or read *only as a tale that*  
*is told*, what apology shall we be able to make  
*when* the event shall take place ? How shall  
 we lift up our heads, if our professed faith of  
 it,



it, and the regards *demand*ed to it, shall not be sufficient to preserve from the terrors of it? SERM.  
VIII.

3d Reflect. We may hence collect the awfulness of death, and the wisdom and necessity a preparation for it.

For as death finds us, such shall we be found at our Lord's second appearance. From the season of our dissolution to that time, there can be no alteration as to moral character. That is unalterably fixed *then*; for as the verse before the text assures us, after death, tis all judgment, that is, there is no further tryal, no means, no opportunity for an alteration in the character: and therefore according to what we are found at death, our happiness or misery *commencing* at death, shall be perfected upon our Saviour's coming. Whatever therefore is a preparation for the one, is a preparation for the other. This thought, to which I know of nothing that *reason* can object, sufficiently exposes that fallacy, from whence I believe this solemnity influences no more, viz. that *it is at a great distance*. But surely this is much more than any one can tell! Reason I am sure *can* say nothing to it; and revelation *hath* not said any thing, but only that it will be very *sudden*. But what if this *visible* appearance of the Son of God, which we have neither words nor thoughts to describe, should be at  
ever

SERM. ever such a distance, yet *death we know* is not  
 VIII. a great way off; and this we also *know*, that  
 { as we are then found, we shall look for him  
 to salvation or destruction. How madly ridiculous is it then, to make its *futurity* a reason of our disregard! In a very awful sense doth our Saviour come to *every one* at their death, from the established *connection* that there is between that and judgment as to the state of all mankind. Surely then, the *nearer* event, and which we cannot dispute, derives a very great solemnity from the more *distant* one; and bespeaks a concern and solicitude how we shall meet our Lord. Is it not wisdom to prepare for the most important solemnities? and can any be more so, than what decides our state for eternity?

Christians! our very discipleship to Jesus, the Saviour, which we publicly *avow* before God, angels, and one another, whenever we solemnize the memory of his death in the manner we do at his table. \* — I say our very discipleship to Jesus, that way proclaimed, declares that we believe all these things. Let us *live* by this faith, and see to it that our spirits and practice be such as carry the stamp of these truths upon them. They are in their *nature* most affecting, and full of influence, if regarded. Their influence

\* Preached on Sacrament-day.



ence depends upon our attention, as it is only SERM.  
in concurrence therewith that we can hope VIII.  
for a superior influence. When under the  
power of the thought, we shall scarcely forbear putting such queries to ourselves: "What will *my* condition be in the great day of the Lord? will he appear to *my* salvation or destruction! what title have *I* to his joy! what security from the wrath of the Lamb! what can I upon his own warrant expect for myself, when I look for his coming!" Such queries have a very powerful efficacy, towards the impressing our lives with an *habitual* regard to that day. When this is the case, whether we sleep or are alive, at his return, the event will be comfortable: the terrors of the scene will be no shock to us, tho' all nature stands in silent expectation of its last doom. Amidst all the starting alarm of the sound, *He cometh, He cometh to judgment*, our triumph may increase. The glory of the Saviour is the security and joy of his saved ones. I will conclude the subject with the words of the apostle John 1st. Ep. ii. 28. "And now, my fellow christians, *let us abide in him*; immoveably persevering in our union with him, our dependance on him, and our allegiance to him; *that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*"

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# S E R M O N IX.



The Duty and Wisdom of setting the  
L O R D always before us.



P S A L M xvi. 8.

*I have set the Lord always before me.*

W I S E and happy man! thus to live S E R M.  
in the noblest direction of his facul- IX.  
ties! and from thence to find the most *awful*  
truth in the world to be the most *refreshing*  
one! We have a thousand testimonies, that  
there is a God; exhibited for the assuring the  
human mind of the truth itself, and the lead-  
ing us to that converse with this God, which  
V G L. II. P is

SERM. is the highest entertainment and greatest consolation, whilst we are in this present state; and directly preparative of the soul for the state ultimately intended for it. But, all the *benefit* of this truth depends upon ourselves. It is in our power, whether we *will see* the every where visible God in the wonders of his power and mercy, or experience those impressions and consolations which flow from thence. The world yields too many sad testimonies, that mankind *may live as if* there was no God in it, both in respect of the rack of their minds under the changes of life, and of an absolute lawfulness as to the conduct of it. But every such instance demonstrates both their folly and crime; and binds down their wickedness and misery upon themselves.

Tho' some things bearing the face of religion may be found *in common* with the sincere and the hypocrite, yet there are others whereby they will always be *distinguished* the one from the other. Of this kind is the behaviour of David described in the text. Therein is the power of godliness, the religion of the heart, manifested in contradistinction to the *meer form*. "I have set the Lord always before me."

This you see by the word *always*, was not an *occasional* or an *accidental* thing; what he  
was



was *driven* to by some strait or fright ; nor was it a religious *mood* or *fit* : On the contrary it describes an *habitual* practice—Nor on the other hand, are we to understand him as if he was *never* chargeable with the contrary. *This* his great transgression abundantly confutes ; since there could not be a stronger evidence than that was, of his having *at that time* laid aside his principle ; dropping the regard of God which is included in it, and losing the benefit of the restraint which would have flowed from it. So far as it was *habitual* and *prevalent*, he is an excellent pattern to us, since thereby his piety is fully cleared from hypocrisy, and the best foundation is laid for an holy life, from the very nature of the principle. And tho' *he* was *not a perfect* pattern in this respect, yet we want not one who was so, even the Son of God, to whom the apostle applies these words, as more eminently belonging to him than to David. Acts ii. 25. Whilst therefore we are considering David's piety in this description of himself, let us remember it is descriptive also of our great Master ; who is a *prescribed* pattern, as he was one *without a blemish* ; by an *universal* conformity to whom, we are sure to attain all the beauties and benefits of perfection.

SERM.  
IX.

SERM. In order to the improvement of these words

IX. I would

I. Consider what we are to understand by the expression of setting the Lord always before us.

II. How, or in what manner, this will evidence itself: wherein the wisdom and advantages of it will appear very singular.

I. Let us attend to the expression itself, by which the Psalmist describes the prevailing disposition of his own mind. "He set the Lord always before him."

Now in the general I think it imports, "an habitual sense of God upon the mind." I would not reflect upon your understandings so much as to suppose any to *doubt* of the existence of a divine Being; whilst their very *senses* supply them with such abundant evidence of that truth, since the whole creation, if I may so express it, echoes forth his glorious name. But it is too apparent, that there is as wide a difference amongst those who agree in the general acknowledgment of this truth, as there is between *some* who acknowledge it, and *others* who dispute it. However strange this may seem, the cause is plain: Some merely *allow* this truth, or they do *not deny* it; others *consider* it, and frequently *reflect* on it. Some look on it as a *speculation*,

on



on which at times they may exercise their SERM.  
understandings by way of amusement, and IX.  
then lay it wholly aside: others estimate it as  
the most concerning truth; their minds are so  
*penetrated* therewith, that the thought frequent-  
ly *returns* in its evidence, accompanied with a  
*sensible* influence: It mingles itself in *common*  
affairs, as what has got the *possession* of the  
mind will do. To the one it is a *passant, acci-*  
*dental* thought; to the other, it is *familiar*  
and *indulged*. From hence now, tho' *both*  
may agree in the *admitting* it as a truth, "that  
there is a God," yet from the different *degree*  
of their belief and sense of it, whilst the one  
acts the part of an angel, the other *may* act  
the part of a devil.

Since we are the offspring of an all-perfect  
*mind*, and were intended to resemble our great  
former in *intellectual* powers, it is reasonable  
to suppose that the human mind was *origi-*  
*nally* formed with a strong *gravitation*, or a  
*tendency*, toward the parental mind. The soul  
coming out of its Maker's hands, in its state  
of rectitude, was naturally and *principally* dis-  
posed to converse with him, and to turn to  
him upon every occasion. Amongst other ef-  
fects of a general depravity upon sin's entering  
into the world, *this* is none of the least, that  
this bias and determination of the soul to-

SERM. wards the blessed God is greatly *weakned* :

IX. mankind are become more prone, if they could, with the *first* transgressors to *hide themselves* from him. *This* indeed *cannot* be done; but they go as far as they can *towards* it, by hiding *him* from themselves, or by banishing *him* from their minds, and thoughts, and avoiding as much as they can all occasions of converse. But tho' the *inclination* to this converse may be in a great measure lost, yet our *ability* for it still remains. It is not an *impracticable* attainment under all our degeneracy, "To set the Lord always before us;" yea, it is equally our crime and folly *not* to do it, since our intellectual powers are sufficient for it, and he hath so abundantly made himself known in order to it. Now this, as I just now said, in general implies, "an *habitual* sense of God upon our minds as the subject of our thoughts and reflections;" including the representation which he hath given us of his *own nature*, and the *relative* views under which we are led to conceive of him, respecting ourselves. These are *distinct* things; but they are *both* of them regarded by the mind that sets the Lord before it.

There are four things which I apprehend are the principal ingredients in the disposition and practice which the text describes; or that

are



are implied in the setting the Lord always before us, viz. a governing apprehension of God's presence with us—Of his taking cognizance of us—Of his unchangeable ability to help and assist us—and an habitual propension to turn towards him by thought and reflection upon every occasion. SERM. IX.

1. This temper and behaviour of the Psalmist in the text, implies, a governing apprehension of him as ever present with us.

The *invisibilty of God*, which follows from the perfection of his nature, is the great reason why minds, so far under the power of sense as ours, are so insensible and regardless of his presence. Because it is not the *immediate* object of sense, the generality, judging wholly thereby, have no sense of it. But herein they manifest great stupidity, and want of reflection, of which they themselves may be made judges. For, our experience tells us, that it is not *necessary* that we should *hear* or *see* a fellow-creature to assure us that he is near us: we may be ascertained of this by other means; which when we are, we *consider* them as present *equally* as if our eyes or ears informed us of it: and this general knowledge of the thing that they are within such a nearness to us, hath naturally the same *influence* and *effect* upon us that our *seeing* or *hearing* them would have.

SERM. have. Now, though the divine presence be  
 IX. not the object of our *senses*, yet our reason as-  
 { fures us, that God is and must be with us:  
 and if the general knowledge of a fellow-crea-  
 ture's being nigh us shall have the *same* influ-  
 ence upon us as their being *within* our sight  
 or hearing, should not the *certainty* of the di-  
 vine presence with us, upon the testimony and  
 assurance of reason and revelation too, establish  
*this* apprehension of him in our minds; though  
 through the perfection of his nature, and the  
 imperfection of ours, we have not the imme-  
 diate testimony of our senses? If we consult  
 the *highest* faculty of our nature, our reason,  
 that concurs with the divine oracles in attesting,  
 that the divine presence is an *universal* one;  
 that God is intimately near to all his crea-  
 tures: he is *in* all places, and *with* all persons;  
 he is not far from every one of us; "for in him  
 we live, and move, and have our being." Acts.  
 xvii. 27. 28. it is an *essential* perfection of his  
 nature so to be. This is very expressly and sub-  
 limely ascribed to him, Psal. cxxxix. 7. &c.  
 "whither can I go from thy spirit, whither  
 can I flee from thy presence." &c. "To what  
 space can I retire which is not full of thee! to  
 what part of the universe can I fly where thou  
 art not as intimately present as in this!"



The presence of every *created* being is con- SERM.  
fined to a certain measure of space; and our IX.  
*ordinary* converse lying only with *such kind* }  
of beings, we scarcely know how to *conceive*  
greater perfection in, or to allow it to, the  
divine nature. The mind of man being li-  
mited in its conceptions, is apt to *bound* the  
nature of every thing by its *own scantiness*.  
But as well might we judge of the magnitude  
of the heavenly orbs by our *senses*; or say,  
that the sun and stars are no bigger than they  
*appear* to our eye, as pretend to circumscribe  
the all-perfect God within the dimensions  
which *our senses* would allot him, or to make  
*them* the judges, or the measure, of what we  
will allow to be truth *concerning* him. No:  
however confined and limited *every other* being  
may be, God is at no distance from any thing  
he hath made. Where religion is in any power  
or prevalency, the mind is habitually influen-  
ced by this apprehension: it is a principle *ready*  
to be applied by the mind *to itself*, as its secu-  
rity under the temptation of *secrecy* more espe-  
cially; and to maintain that affectionate reve-  
rence which naturally arises from a persuasion  
of our being always in a *real* and *awful* pre-  
sence.

Thus the pious person reasons with himself:  
“ The Lord of heaven and earth is most in-  
“ timately

SERM. “ timately present with every part of his crea-

IX. “ tion: he *must* therefore be *wherever I am*.

“ Doth he *fill* heaven and earth with his pre-  
 “ sence? He *must* then be *near to me*—He is  
 “ with me in my daily and hourly removes,  
 “ and amidst my midnight retirements and en-  
 “ closures: I am surrounded by him, encom-  
 “ passed with him: wherever I am, there  
 “ God is.” The carrying *this* apprehension of  
 God about with us, and by frequent reflection  
 upon it to *feel* its force and influence, is, with  
 the Psalmist, to place him always before us.

2. This expression implies, a prevailing  
 sense on our minds of his *taking cognizance* of  
 us.

If we believe his *universal presence*, we  
 must subscribe to his *universal knowledge*. The  
 most *perfect mind being every where*, must be  
*acquainted with every thing*. If we can go no  
 where from his presence, we can conceal no-  
 thing from his eye. However wonderful *such*  
 a knowledge appears to us; how far soever it  
 may surpass *all* the degrees thereof with which  
 we are conversant, however it transcends our  
 capacity to *comprehend* it, yet our own reason  
 forces us to admit, and ascribe it as essential  
 to, and the prerogative of the divine mind.  
 Now the truly pious mind is possessed with a  
 sense of the divine cognizance or observance  
 both



both in respect of its actions, and its state and circumstances. SERM.  
IX.

The pious mind, I say, hath a governing sense of the divine cognizance or observance of its *actions* and *behaviour*.

Such a one *dare* not say with the *prophane*, according to the representation in the book of Job, "How doth God know, can he judge through the dark cloud? they are a covering to him that he seeth not, he walketh in the circuit of heaven." Job xxii. 13, 14. The language of which is this, that he is so *remote* from the abodes of mortal men, that he *cannot inspect* their behaviour; or that he is so *confined to* the heavens, as no way to *concern himself* with the children of men. Such language as this, I say, the pious mind *dare* not utter; nor in the least indulge the *thought*. Nor can it *allow* itself to say with the *careless*, "God is *indeed* here, and every where, but I did not *consider* it." No: It is a standing conviction and frequent reflection of such a mind, "Thou God seest me: thine eyes are in every place; no thought can be withholden from thee." Prov. xv. 3. A confession this is, *not only* that the divine knowledge is most extensive and most perfect *in itself*, but also that the eyes of the Lord are actually *upon all the ways* of the sons of men; not as a meer spectator, but as one who hath  
given

SERM. given them laws, and takes cognizance of their

IX. behaviour, in order to award to every one ac-

cording to their ways. Jer. xxxii. 19. And by the way, his sentence must be just and right, because it is founded on his *own knowledge* which is infallible, since it reaches to the very thoughts and intentions of the heart. However concealed the springs of the pious man's actions may be from all *besides*, or however unsearchable they be to any knowledge, *short of the knowledge of the heart*, yet he looks upon them in their principles and ends, in their rise and in their execution, as naked and open, to the eyes of him with whom he hath an account.

We cannot doubt of the truth of such a conclusion, when we consider ourselves as the *workmanship of God*. For the Psalmist's reasoning in favour of this truth is unanswerable. Psal. xciv. 9. "He who planted the ear, shall *be not* hear! He who formed the eye, shall *be not* see!" The Psalmist's general argument is plainly this: "All *our* faculties, powers, " and capacities, are *from God*. Is it then to " be imagined that he hath bestowed any *degree* of a perfection on a creature which he " doth *not possess* most *perfectly* in himself; or " in which he doth *not infinitely surpass* his " creatures? Or, can it be supposed that he " hath



“ hath set a creature, who hath nothing but SERM.  
“ what it hath derived from himself, *beyond* IX.  
“ his own reach and cognizance.” This the  
Psalmist justly stiles a *stupid* imagination—But  
further.

The pious mind sets God before it as taking cognizance of its *condition* and *circumstances*. His knowledge thereof is accompanied with a paternal regard thereto; and so it is *considered* by such a one.

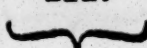
When we look upon our *single* selves, amidst the *vast extent* of the divine works, and compare ourselves with the all-transcending excellency of the divine nature, we might be almost led to fear being *overlooked* as inconsiderable, or *despised* as contemptible. But God hath prevented so melancholy a thought, by assuring us that his providential care and regard extends to the birds of the air, which he feeds; and our divine instructor has bid us *from thence* to reason and conclude, that he will *much more* concern himself *for us*. Matth. vi. 26.--We are warranted therefore thus to set God before us, as attending to our various circumstances; taking a parental notice of what we need; of what we request; of what we labour under; and what we are breathing after; not only of what we *are*, and do, but also of what we would be, and would do; appointing the matter

SERM. ter and manner, proportioning the measure of  
 IX. our trials and *enjoyments* too, according to what  
 we can bear—Whatever reason we have for  
 grateful wonder at the encouragement which  
 we have to represent God thus to ourselves, it  
 is actual duty thus to set him before us; and  
 to live with the assured sense of such a regard  
 from him upon our minds. And as there is  
 no ground to fear his *disdain* from his transcen-  
 dant majesty and greatness, it is an actual *en-  
 crease* of our satisfaction under the contem-  
 plation of his *greatness*, that *such* a being doth  
 take a cognizance of such as we are.

3. Another view wherein a pious mind re-  
 presents a divine Being to itself is this, as one  
 every way qualified and disposed to relieve,  
 support and assist it.

To this particular the Psalmist had more es-  
 pecially his eye in the text. “It hath ever  
 “ been my practice, faith he, under every  
 “ thing alarming, to turn my thoughts to God  
 “ as always more intimate and near to me  
 “ than any thing else could be: and agree-  
 “ ably to this, *now* when I peculiarly need  
 “ him, my faith assures me, he is as it were  
 “ on my right hand, able and ready to help  
 “ me.” God’s ability as an helper, is made  
 up of will and power: It might be said, *his  
 will is power*, that is, effects are produced *up-*  
 on



on his willing them. Thus the psalmist just- SERM.  
ly and elegantly expresses it, *he spake, and it IX.*  
*was done, he commanded, and it stood fast.* Psal.   
xxxiii. 9. However near he may be to us, what-  
ever knowledge he might have of our case,  
if his *will* to help, and *capacity* to aid, was  
not answerable to our circumstances, it would  
yield us no satisfaction. But let us join a wise  
goodness, omnipotence, and a parental regard,  
to a perfect knowledge of our condition, and  
then the idea of a friend and helper like God  
is compleat, the pleasure is entire. And this  
is the truth of the case: The *best* of beings  
is *almighty*; the greatest conceivable power is  
essentially accompanied with perfect goodness:  
he who is never at a distance from us, who is  
perfectly acquainted with our state, however  
diversified, is *in power* fully equal to it, and  
*in will* invariably determined to do what is  
*best*.

4. The setting the Lord before us may also  
imply, an habitual propension or disposition in  
our minds *to turn to him* by thought and re-  
flection, agreeably to every occurrence.

The soul of man from its original powers,  
hath a *capacity* for conversing with an invisible  
God; and by the renovation of its power,  
through the divine grace, it is *inclined* to it.  
The agency and sovereignty of providence in  
all

SERM. all events is ever *uppermost* in the pious mind,  
 IX. amidst all the variety of second causes which appear concerned therein. And this is evidenced by the *immediate* direction of the thought to God, answerably to the several dispensations of providence under which it is: as thus; Under the sense of every fresh mercy or favourable interposition, *no sooner* doth it *feel* a *delight* and *joy*, but a sacrifice of praise is offered to the God, to the fountain and source of its mercy. When very threatening dangers present themselves, *such* a mind directs its eye to God, or as the Psalmist expresses it, “lifts up its eye to the hills from whence cometh its help,” its *present* help in a time of trouble, assuring itself of a sufficiency thereof in him.—Under great perplexities and involved circumstances it calls to mind a wisdom ready to be imparted from above, that can extricate it, make its way plain, and a guidance, the benefit of which is every way, answerable to the need it has of it.—If such a mind is tried with sore exercises, and in its dearest earthly enjoyments, it immediately *advert*s to the divine hand and agency; it tells itself, *It is the Lord*: he hath taken away nothing but what he gave; and is just in all that he has brought upon me. In the midst of prosperity and enjoyment, when it is tasting the sweets, and exulting under the comfort-



comfortable shines of providence, the most SERM.  
natural reflection of such a mind thereupon IX.  
is to the great Shepherd, who hath *prepared*  
the pasture, the fair and plentiful provision,  
and by whose favour its mountain stands strong.  
To add no more instances ; when such a mind  
as the text describes, *reviews* the dangers it  
*hath* escaped, the difficulties it *hath* been car-  
ried through, the mercies it *hath* enjoyed, and  
the duties it *hath* discharged, it is *ready* with  
its dutiful, grateful, and devout ascriptions,  
in the language of the apostle, “ By the grace  
of God I am what I am ; and having obtain-  
ed help from him, I have stood to this day.”  
1 Cor. xv. 10. Acts xxvi. 22.

This is included in setting the Lord always  
before us ; thus should he be presented, habi-  
tually and upon every occurrence to the view  
of the mind : thus is the pious mind disposed  
to converse with, and to acknowledge him in  
the dispensations of his providence and grace,  
by suitable reflections and confessions, rising  
above all natural and second causes to a *present*  
God. Thus *was* the Psalmist's eye, thus  
*should* ours be, ever towards the Lord.

This would lead to the second general head :  
which was to specify more particularly, *now*  
this disposition and principle will evidence it-  
VOL. II. Q self :

SERM. self: whereby the wisdom and advantage of  
IX. this *habitual* piety will appear.

But I shall conclude at present with two reflections naturally offering themselves from what has been said.

1<sup>st</sup> Reflect. Our duty and happiness are in the closest connection.

If man was made for God or for a converse with him, which his very capacities demonstrate, then by that converse is man's interest in the highest degree subserved. The more habitual and prevailing our sense of God is, the more suitably shall we act to what his excellencies and relations demand from us; and by the very same means do we lay a foundation for the stability and peace of our own *minds*, in which beyond every thing else our happiness consists. The honour done to God by thus setting him always before us, is not greater than the benefit accruing to ourselves thereby. I wish all would make the trial, whether our present felicity is not promoted and secured in proportion to our piety; or whether our tranquillity is not the more stable, the more habitually our minds are influenced by religious principles. It is because our religion hath no more power, that we derive no more pleasure and advantage from it. If a *stated* intercourse with God is required, the *design* of it is, that our



our peace may be perfect, and that our joy SERM.  
may be full. Let us lay it down with our- IX.  
selves as an eternal truth, and never depart  
from it till our *experience* confutes it, "That the  
" happy state of our own minds from harmony  
" and peace, will always be in proportion to  
" the habitual governing sense we have of  
" God; and our established persuasion of his  
" presence and providence."

This brings me to the second reflection.

2. How great a difference must piety or impiety make, as to the enjoyment of the present life!

As the one or the other is a character and a course, the consciousness of a present God as witness and inspector, becomes the most pleasing, or dreadful thought to the human mind.

Impiety by no means admits, much less can it sustain, the *deliberate* thought, the *fixed* contemplation. Its great care is to keep out the returning reflection, and a *labour* it is to do it. For the wicked to make a God the subject of their serious contemplation, would be the striking a dagger into their own breast: and were they *possessed* with the apprehension of such a witness and avenger, it would be to dwell in anguish and horror. And as such are in *no disposition* to *relish* his presence, they are not in a capacity of feeling it in the *joys* and *comforts*

SERM. of it, or to have any other testimony of it  
IX. than what they suffer from it. "O the

“ thought ! to lie under the *displeasure* of an Al-  
“ mighty Being, who is with me *at all times*,  
“ who hath an absolute influence over me, and  
“ every thing concerning me ; from whose  
“ presence with me I have no expectation,  
“ but of knowing it by the *terrors* of it !”

I say not this to discourage any from *at-tempting* a change in their condition ; but to awaken them to set the Lord before them by an habitual regard and converse. Then, how is the scene changed ! words are wanting to represent the *satisfaction* which a consciousness of his presence yields, *when* accompanied with the assurance of his love. Hereby the cheerfulness of such is provided for amidst the frowns of the world, and a shade of circumstance. Hereby their hopes have the most stable support amidst threatening prospects ; since they know their *helper* is at hand ; and is nearer to them than any thing *hurtful* can be. Under deceptions and disappointments from the world, they can in a good measure possess themselves, since their almighty friend is still the same. Finally, such can look upon death itself as most friendly : for to them it is only taking down the veil which prevented the more *desirable* sight of that God, a *belief* of

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whose presence with them *here* was their *chief* SERM.  
entertainment and consolation; and the intro- IX.  
ducing them into the much more *sensible* mani-  
festations of it, as widely different as faith and  
fight. Such are the fruits, such are the gains, of  
*habitual* piety.

May this discourse be followed with this happy effect upon you and myself. Since the Being we have more to do with than with all besides, is ever present with us by an immediate inspection, sovereign influence, and parental regard, may we always represent him to ourselves *as ever present*: maintaining an intercourse with him by frequent acts of *solemn* prayer and praise, as returning opportunities for them may offer themselves, and by an habitual ascent of our minds towards him by thought and reflection; walking as *before him*. This is religion; and nothing less deserves the name: These are the infallible means of deriving distinguishing testimonies of his being near to us, in the present effects of his wisdom, power, and love: these are the immediate *preparatives* for our being happy hereafter in the *joys* of his presence, as it is manifested in the heavenly world.



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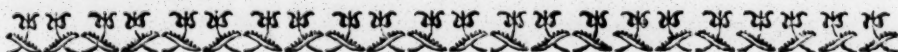


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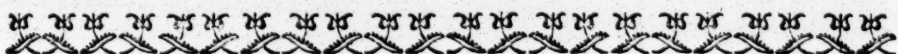




# S E R M O N X.



On the same S U B J E C T.



P S A L M xvi. 8.

*I have set the Lord always before me.*

**T**H E S E words are a very distinguishing SERM.  
 branch of a religious character, one X.  
 eminent article wherein the power of godliness  
 is manifested in contradistinction to the meer  
 form. This you see by the word *always* was  
 not an occasional or accidental thing: The  
 Psalmist was not *thrown* upon it by any par-  
 ticular distress or terror of mind; but it de-  
 scribes his prevailing practice; allowance  
 Q 4 being

SERM. being made for those failings and interruptions,  
 X. to which the best character is liable.

I have proposed to consider.

I. What is to be understood by the expression *itself*.

I told you it imported *in general*, “an habitual sense of God upon the mind both in  
 “ respect of the excellencies of his nature,  
 “ and the relations wherein he stands to us.”  
 Now in this disposition and behaviour of the Psalmist, there are four things principally included--A governing apprehension of God's presence with him—Of his taking cognizance of him—Of his being perfectly qualified and willing to relieve, support and assist him—and  
 An habitual propension and disposition in the Psalmist's mind to turn to God by thought and reflection, agreeably to every occurrence and circumstance. These I think are the chief ingredients in this description of a pious mind, the setting the Lord always before it—Having enlarged on and endeavoured to illustrate these particulars ; I proceed now

II. To shew you *how*, or in what *manner*, this disposition will *manifest* itself, as it implies an habitual prevailing sense of God upon the mind ; or as he is brought by thought and contemplation to our near and affecting view : in  
 attending



attending to which the indisputable wisdom and advantages of it will appear. SERM.  
X.

Every branch of a religious disposition, hath a natural influence upon the tenor and course of the life; and that disposition that hath most piety in it, will produce the most virtue. *This* described in the text is evidently a *pious* one: *this* therefore, as every other principle, will discover itself by its influence upon the outward acts—and that in the following respects.

1. The habitual sense of a present God will be evidenced, by its restraining us under temptations to evil.

The scripture frequently and justly resolves the sins of men into a forgetfulness of God as the *cause*; to the *not* attending to, and reflecting upon, his presence and inspection. And that such a disposition should be an inlet to all wickedness is very obvious; for, where there is such a forgetfulness and banishment of God from the mind, it is the same thing in respect of influence, as if there was *no God*. Psal. 1. 22. In like manner the very nature of the thing assures us, that a thorough conviction of an existing God, and the frequent presenting him to the mind by serious contemplation, would be a singular preservative from known tempta-

SERM. temptations, and manifest itself by resisting  
 X. them—To be a little particular,

By such an habitual sense of God the *heinousness* of our compliance, or as the Apostle expresses it, the *sinfulness* of sin, would appear in its aggravations to our own minds.

We should see it in its *true* light; in its *real* deformity. We should by that means discern the perfect contrariety of it to the divine nature; the contempt it carries in it of the divine authority and majesty; the ingratitude to the engagements of love and goodness; and the defiance of the Almighty's power and displeasure. These shocking *aggravations* of a compliance with temptations, will be present with the mind so far as God is set before it. And who that hath any thing of the man left, could, as it were, look the Almighty *in the face*, and sin against him! Who that hath either reason, conscience, or any apprehension of good and evil, of happiness or misery, could dare to call God *to witness* to their provocations! And in this light would temptations and compliances with them, appear to the mind that hath a God before it. The *former* would be shocking to ourselves, from what it solicits and urges us to. The very worst would find themselves under *some* restraint, had they just apprehensions of a divine Being, and were they  
*presented*



presented to the mind by reflection. This is SERM. plainly intimated by the Prophet, Hof. vii. 2. X. where speaking of the Jews as to their great degeneracy, he in God's name declares, "They *consider not* in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness." as if he had said, not withstanding the general knowledge which they have of my observation and inspection, yet they set it not before their own minds, they apply it not to themselves and to their own behaviour; if they did, they *dare not* do as they do—If therefore we have a governing sense of the divine presence and inspection, it will discover itself by its being a restraint and preservative under temptations, from the heinousness of a compliance; nor can there be any such disposition, if compliances are easy or frequent.

Further, By such a realizing apprehension of a present God, secrecy and concealment from the world, would lose its influence in the *success* of a temptation.

There is nothing that hath greater power and prevalence towards a compliance with solicitations to evil, than that the fact may be *committed*, and yet remain *undiscovered*. But what force would there be in this circumstance whilst by setting God before us, there is a *witness* presented to the mind, who is a more formidable one than all besides? Could we assure

SERM. assure ourselves that our acts would remain an

X. everlasting secret to the world, what force  
 could this have in it, whilst the mind was under the influence of this persuasion, that all was open and manifest to God, in respect of whose knowledge and inspection, there *can be no* such thing as *concealment*? The darkness darkneth not from him; darkness and light are both alike to him; that is, the most open and the most covert practices are equally under his view. Psal. cxxxix. 11. This, when believed with the heart, and full upon the mind, must effectually weaken the inducement of privacy: The secret chamber, or the most retired cell, will have no more of an encouragement to evil, than the open stage of the world. On the contrary, the argument will be *ready*, and be found unanswerably strong, "How can I do this and that wickedness, and sin even under the immediate eye of God." Gen. xxxix. 9. Do we not all find, even when the inclination sets very strong, and other circumstances conspire to form a very powerful temptation, that the apprehension of the single eye of a servant, of a child, or of one who is almost an idiot, shall have influence enough to restrain and controul all those circumstances? And is there not infinitely more, in the contemplation and assurance of



of God being a witness to the most secret of SERM.  
our actions, yea to the thoughts of our hearts, to X.  
damp the inclination, and to overrule the in-  
ducement of secrecy, than can be found from  
the single inspection of a fellow-creature?

2. The habitual sense of a present God will prove itself, by preserving us from hypocrisy, self-flattery, and deceit.

Hypocrisy, I think, lies in seeming or appearing to be what we are *not*: in taking up an *appearance* to conceal a *real* character; or in assuming a *fair outside* to hide a *naughty disposition*. Matth. xxiii. 25. The foundation of this, is the general reputation that virtue and goodness have in the consciences of all; and the disgrace and reproach in which the contrary stands with the human mind. For it is *immediately* for the sake of the world, that any persons play the hypocrite, though as they propose, *ultimately* for themselves, or to some *personal* advantage. How near soever we are to ourselves, it is certain we can exceedingly impose on ourselves; even as to what respects our own moral character. The deceit may be as glaring as in that case mentioned, Rev. iii. 17. "Thou sayest I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," or imaginest that thou art in an *abounding* circumstance; whilst *really* thou art, though thou knowest

SERM. knowest *not that* thou art, “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.”

But now, who that duly and frequently set God before them, could ever put on masks and disguises; or practice upon themselves to establish a character with themselves, to which they have no right, I say, who *could* do this, that had any governing sense of God upon their minds? If our apprehensions of him are agreeable to what revelation, or reason, would lead us to form, we cannot but *tell ourselves*, that whatever impositions we pass upon ourselves they cannot pass with the searcher of hearts, or in the least influence his judgement of us; that it is impossible to hide an evil heart under any specious profession, or to conceal the wretched *truth* and *reality*, by any *varnished* or *painted* appearance. None would *attempt* to flatter or dissemble, if they believed it would be *discerned and seen through*: that would be both defeating their design, and the loss of their reputation, at the same time. Nothing would appear more senseless and vain than hypocrisy, or any tricks which we play with our own judgments and consciences, in order to impose upon others, or to keep up a reputation with ourselves, was the mind but under the apprehension of such a witness and inspector as God is, who trieth the very heart,  
and



and hath pleasure only in uprightness. 1 Chron. SERM. XXIX. 17. We should never, *in that case*, as- X. cribe excellencies to ourselves, which do not belong to us; nor varnish over vices with the title of virtues; we shall not attempt to excuse what we cannot defend; nor disguise to ourselves what conscience condemns: we shall never impute our actions to a principle *we have not*, nor be able to take any satisfaction in what the world sees of us and ascribes to us, unless we can also derive a pleasure from what God *alone* knows of us; and can witness for us, that we have walked *before him* in *truth* and with a *perfect heart*, and have done that which is good in *his sight*. 2 Kings xx. 3. It would never enter into our heart or head to palm such deceptions upon ourselves or the world, as is too common, was God but habitually before our eyes: for we could form no apprehension of him more naturally than this, That no dissimulations or colourings, either as to mind or life, can escape his knowledge; and that nothing but *truth* and *reality* will be admitted or estimated by him.

3. If we do set the Lord before us, we shall evidence it by the homage and worship which we offer to him.

Upon the supposition, much more upon the *belief*, of the divine existence, our *own* minds

SERM. *minds* dictate the devout acknowledgment of  
 X. him by *direct* acts. This is only giving to  
 him the things which are *his*, and is but common justice. To profess the belief of a supream Lord, of an heavenly father, and at the same time to look upon it as an indifferent, much more a *needless* thing to worship him, is a flying in the face of our own minds; and an attempting to falsify what we *feel* to be right and necessary. Every act of prayer and praise, or whatever other act may be included in the term *worship*, must be offered to an *invisible* Being. His nature admits him not to be the immediate object of *sense*: but all religious acts addressed to him are *acknowledgments* of his immediate presence, and observation of us. We should never call upon him, or give him thanks, but upon the full conviction and assurance, that though we see him *not*, he is *ever with us, and near to us*; and on *that*, amongst other things, are our expectations of benefit by our worship grounded. Hereupon, the soul that is under the most immediate sense of this presence, either in its general temper and disposition, or when engaged in particular acts of worship, will in its best manner *suit* its expressions of honour and homage, and *proportion* its services, to the excellency of the Being which the mind sets before itself. Its  
 unfeigned



unfeigned intention will be to glorify him SERM.  
thereby : There will be a sincere *desire* that its X.  
offering may be such, as that the great object of  
its regard may *esteem himself* thereby *honoured* :  
and accordingly it will bring the *very best* it  
hath.

Further, a God present *to* the mind, and  
apprehended as present *with* it, will lead us to  
perform every act of worship with *a view* to  
the divine acceptance and favour. It then  
cannot be eye service or lip labour, as men-  
pleasers, but all will be performed *as to the*  
*Lord* ; with the most direct and prevailing de-  
sire of pleasing him, and to obtain the ho-  
nour and happiness of his acceptance.

This habitual sense of God, will *also* secure  
the exercise of those affections, which *answer*  
to the duties of piety in which we engage.  
There will be devotion in the acts : that is, the  
heart, with its train of passions, to be sure  
then with the *leading* passion, love, will ascend  
towards him, draw nigh to him, and converse  
with him : It will feel an awe and reverence  
from a sense of the divine presence and obser-  
vance of its behaviour ; and no less sensible  
will it be of an excitement and engagement  
to such an intercourse, from the ardency of its  
desire after the divine love and blessing. Those

SERM. duties only will be of any worth in the estimate of the soul itself, wherein it *hath been* most truly with God, and which *have been* performed under the nearest and most affecting views of his presence and perfections.

Hereupon, such an habitual sense of God will also evidence itself, by a *constancy* in devotion on all proper occasions. It will become a *practice* and a *course*. It is the direct means of procuring and keeping up a *spirit* of devotion; or a *disposition* to those acts, by which every reasonable creature ought to maintain a converse with the great Author of its Being.

In a word, the setting the Lord *always* before us, would peculiarly incline us to consecrate *stated* portions of time for acts of homage and worship; it would greatly promote an habitual preparation of the heart, and the collectedness of the mind in such exercises; and beyond every other means would render them such for the real devotion of them, as the all-knowing God may accept; and such as are most becoming and beneficial to those who offer them.

4. The setting the Lord always before us will evidence itself, by the influence it hath upon our general course and conversation: By  
rendering



rendering it worthy of him, and becoming our-  
selves. SERM.  
X.

And this it will do in these three respects.—  
It promotes a serious temper: It will lead to  
an *universality* of obedience: And inspire a  
*zeal* and *cheerfulness* in the discharge of every  
duty.

I. It promotes a *serious temper*.

Let none be affrighted at the word. What-  
ever meaning the unthinking may put upon  
it, it is only their ignorance and confusion of  
thought that hath set the thing in an *un-  
amiable* light. I mean no more by a *serious  
temper here*, than a disposition to think, con-  
sider, and reflect; to attend to, and relish  
things of the most substantial and profitable  
kind; and which of all others promote our  
wisdom, and minister to our happiness. It is  
a temper as far from moroseness and melan-  
choly, as it is from froth and levity.

Now, I say, this temper is greatly subserv-  
ed by an habitual sense of God. From the  
excellency of the object conversed with, the  
mind is put out of taste for trash and trifles;  
the reasonable principle within, if I may so  
express it, acquires a *manly* turn. As a *levity*  
of temper disables for any thing like conside-  
ration or a *fixedness* of thought, and thereby  
deprives

SERM. deprives us of all the benefit of the means for  
 X. virtue and happiness; so this *composed* and *recol-*  
 lected mind is *prepared* to hear the voice of reason  
 and conscience, and to derive kindly impressi-  
 ons from the providence and the word of God.  
 It is the *only* soil wherein goodness can grow;  
 it is the *only* disposition of the mind on which  
 the means of happiness can take effect.

From hence, how melancholy a prospect  
 doth the present age yield us; in which the  
 great contention seems to be, who shall do  
 most to *divest themselves* of *sober* thought and  
*regular* conduct; and to *discountenance* it in  
 others! At what pains and expence are mul-  
 titudes to furnish out and drudge in a round of  
 the most childish amusements, to *prevent* every  
 disposition of the mind which *looks like* seri-  
 ousness, and to bar out every thing which is  
*worth* attending to!

2. This habitual sense of God will influence  
 our general course by rendering our obedience  
*universal*.

The *immediate* foundation of obedience is  
 the *authority* of God, exercised and displayed  
 by the laws he hath given us. So far then as  
 we have an habitual sense of this *Being*, so far  
 must we feel the influence of this *authority*,  
 which derives a commanding power to *every*  
 law.



law. From hence our regards are most likely to flow from a *respect* to God; and consequently will extend to *every* thing wherein he hath given us commandment; since the reason and obligation to a regard of *all*, is the *very same* which attends *any*. From hence it is that the apostle James hath given us that *absolute* decision of the matter; "That whosoever shall keep the *whole* law in *every other* instance, but *allows* himself *statedly* to violate *one* particular, will as certainly be ranked amongst the disobedient and condemned as such a one, as if he had violated *all*." James, ii. 10. And the reason is given in the next verse; which is, That whatever *particular* laws were observed by such persons, it would *not* be from any regard to the divine *authority*, since *that* hath *equally* established *every* precept. Whatever therefore maintains the most lively sense of the divine authority, must have the greatest influence upon the *universality* of our obedience. And what hath an equal power of doing this, as the setting the one lawgiver before us, or the prevailing sense of the presence and inspection of that Being, whose authority is beyond all controversy, and who is also able to save and to destroy for ever, James, iv. 10. From hence every one must see that our obe-

SERM.  
X.

SERM. dience would be the effect of *principle*, and  
 X. proceed from conscience towards God: and  
 { conscience being an *uniform* principle, influ-  
 encing us to *every* particular precept, *every* sin  
 would be forsaken, and *every* duty would be  
 practised, so far as watchfulness, resolution,  
 and endeavour would secure it.

3. The setting the Lord always before us  
 would influence our general course, as it would  
 inspire a zeal and chearfulness in the discharge  
 of every returning duty.

It would be peculiarly serviceable to us in  
 the surmounting the difficulties in the way of  
 our duty, to apprehend ourselves working and  
 struggling *under the eye of God*. How doth it  
 inspirit the soldier, and lead him to act even  
*beyond* himself, who fights immediately in  
*the view* of his prince? How doth the royal  
 presence inspire even the timorous with cou-  
 rage and resolution, supplanting their fears,  
 by raising an ambition of proving their fide-  
 lity? And hath not the eye of God, when  
 immediately apprehended by the mind, as  
 much to animate and warm the soul in the re-  
 solute discharge of its duty, and in the best  
 exertion of its powers, to approve itself to its  
 glorious inspector? It is in all respects the same  
 thing to a mind possessed of its understanding,  
 and



and that duly employs it, That God sees us, SERM.  
as if we saw him. There is as much to strike X.  
and influence such a mind, in its being *beheld* }  
by him, as in his being visible to itself. The  
habitual apprehension of this, cannot but give  
a great spring and solace to the soul, and en-  
able it to act the most like itself. It will give  
an additional strength to every other principle  
of a religious conduct, and strangely animate in  
the whole progress of the christian race. If  
God is habitually set before us, as a witness  
to what we forgoe and bear for his sake; to  
the labours and struggles we go through for  
his acceptance and favour, what will be thought  
*much* or *hard*? How will the resolution of the  
soul *rise* under such an apprehension? Since a  
consciousness of his cognizance of us, whilst  
we are strenuously adhering to our duty, would  
lead us to an assurance of his love. In a word; by  
this habitual representation of God as *with us*  
and *near to us*, we should carry our religion into  
our callings, converse, recreations, and into the  
*whole* of our conduct; it would mix with and  
appear in all our affairs; and in a peculiar  
manner restrain the mind from the too com-  
mon excursions from the path of duty, and  
invigorate it under its disheartening apprehen-  
sions.

SERM.  
X.

This leads me to another particular.

5. The setting the Lord before us will evidence itself, by the confidence and joy with which it fills the mind.

There is a great deal in the thing itself to produce such a consequence; it follows naturally from it. It ministers a more substantial and lasting pleasure to the human mind, than can flow from any present scene of circumstances, that there is a Being ever near us, most intimately acquainted with, and interesting himself in, our affairs; who is *able* to do far beyond the degree of our necessities; and determined to appear for the real happiness of those who are qualified to receive it. The very assurance that there *is* such a Being, derives a considerable refreshment to the mind; but the satisfaction is greatly *enhanced*, by a frequent *presenting* of that Being to the near and affecting view of the mind, as one who is near to us, and takes a parental cognizance of us. In this case, it is a *standing* source of confidence and trust. It lessens the cares, prevents and banishes the fears, which naturally arise from the experimental sense we have of our own inability, to provide against many of our returning wants, to sustain many trials to which we are incident, or to escape surrounding



ing dangers. Under the serious view of what SERM.  
we see human nature is liable to, it would be X.  
no wonder at all, if the best fortified mind  
should sink, or should be tempted to flee from  
the evils it may justly apprehend, by contract-  
ing its own stay in the world, had it no God  
to set before it; or should it want the disposi-  
tion to converse with him. But now, by ac-  
customing ourselves to a reflection and con-  
templation on an all-sufficient, ever-present  
Being, we at the same time *present to ourselves*,  
a *protection* which is able to divert feared evils;  
an *assistance* and *influence* which can abun-  
dantly strengthen the mind against its fears,  
and sustain it under its burdens, yea, we have  
a presence of wisdom, power and goodness,  
before the mind, *ready* to be manifested by  
seasonable and suitable appearances. That ha-  
bitual sense of God which the text describes  
hath such an aptitude to impart relief, calm,  
and confidence, that where the thoughts of  
God are not accompanied with any such con-  
sequences, there is reason to believe we are  
strangers to the disposition itself, as we are  
strangers to the impressions arising from it.

Thus I have specified some of the ways  
wherein such a sense of and converse with  
God, which was the Psalmist's happy temper,  
will

SERM. will manifest itself; whereby the wisdom and  
 X. advantages of it appear very singular.

I will conclude with two reflections from what hath been said.

1st. Reflect. How evident is it to what the sin and misery in the world is chiefly to be ascribed? that is, to an unmindfulness or forgetfulness of God.

From hence our weight of guilt and suffering is much greater, than it would otherwise be. When we have banished God from our minds, or habitually forget him, what wickedness may we not fall into? The Psalmist drawing up a dreadful enumeration of particulars, as the practice of some in his day, assigns this as the reason "God is not in all his thoughts." Ps. x. 4. This was to all purposes the same thing *to them*, in respect of impression and influence, of restraint and consolation, as if they had been under the most firm persuasion, that there was no God. From hence it is no wonder to see every duty waved and slighted, but just as an uncertain inclination happens to turn, or an unexpected terror to drive; or that they should yield to any temptation towards which their inclination may set, or which may appear a means of procuring some worldly advantages. And do not the *declensions* and *apostacies* of



of those who have known better things, *begin* SERM. with forgetting God? Is not this the immediate *spring* of that alteration in them? And doth not this sad change evidently *grow* as he is banished from the mind? Could we allow ourselves in known omissions of what he hath required, or to make free with what he hath forbidden? Could we admit of such a latitude in our walk as is too commonly done? Could we be such conformists to the world as is too customary, where God hath *commanded* us to *separate*, had we him in our eye and thoughts?

And as the prevailing *wickedness* of the world is greatly *owing* to this, so it is peculiarly *aggravated* by it. For, the least exercise of our reason and reflection would bring a God to our view: It is a very obvious thought, as it is an every where proclaimed truth. There is not a creature but may be a guide to *their* and *our* creator. "If we ask the beasts, they will teach us, or the fowls of the air, and they will tell us, or the fishes of the sea, and they will declare to us," Job, xii. 7. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy-work." Though they have literally no voice, they proclaim the divine existence in the ear of reason. Ps. xix. 1,

SERM. 2, 3. These traces of his existence lie open  
 X. to all capacities; nor are the footsteps of his  
 providence in *many* instances less clear to the  
 reflecting mind: in so much, that every thing  
 considered, there is no reflection that might  
 be expected to be more familiar and frequent  
 to a reasonable mind, than that of *a present*  
*God*. But where there is no *sense* of this,  
 there can be no *influence* from it, either in a  
 way of restraint or refreshment. Whereby  
 we are exposed to contract the greatest guilt,  
 and sustain the greatest loss; since there is no  
 truth in the world that carries equal awe, nor  
 equal consolation in it as this; whilst all the  
*benefit* of it, in one respect and the other, en-  
 tirely depends upon its being *present* to the  
*mind*.

2. From what has been said we may infer,  
 the very great importance and necessity of cul-  
 tivating an habitual sense of a divine Being.

This pious disposition is the spring of all  
 suitable behaviour and affection towards him,  
 and the most effectual means of deriving the  
 supports and consolations, which his perfections  
 and providence abundantly yield: Nay I will  
 add, these ends are not to be attained by any  
 means, without this. Amidst the abundant  
 evidence that we have of God's universal pre-  
 sence



fence and perfect knowledge, of his conde- SERM.  
scending regards to us, and his all-sufficiency, X.  
yet all the *influence* and *benefit* of these awful  
and desirable truths, depend upon the exercise  
and employment of our *own minds* upon them.  
What if it be ever so certain that he is near to  
us, and that we are ever before him, if he is  
seldom or never *thus represented* to our minds,  
or set before us in these views by serious con-  
templation, it will be of no more advantage  
to us, than if we were herein infidels. It is  
by no means sufficient to take up with the  
general notions, nor to insert these things a-  
mongst the articles of our *creed*. The benefit  
of all results from their becoming *principles of*  
*action*. And which way shall they become so,  
but by frequent contemplation, and an habi-  
tual sense of them? By this means we should  
have them *at hand* for influence and use, when  
and as we needed them. All the ways I have  
mentioned whereby this governing sense and  
apprehension of God is *evidenced*, are so many  
motives to engage us to *cultivate it*; as they  
are so many distinct advantages obtained there-  
by.

However the matter may appear to the gay  
and thoughtless, the truth needs only to be  
impartially considered in order to be proved,  
That

SERM. That where there is this disposition habitually  
 X. to converse with God, or to set him before  
 us, *animal* pleasures may be as truly enjoyed,  
 yea, with greater safety and a much stronger  
 relish. There is no acquisition, but what will  
 yield a *purser* delight *with* this disposition, than  
*without* it. It restrains from no lower gratifi-  
 cations but what are *injurious*; it is incon-  
 sistent with none, but what are inconsistent  
 with our *own approving* reflections: it subjects  
 to no fears, but what are *preservatives* from the  
 greatest evils; nay, where this disposition is  
 most prevailing, it presents more chearing and  
 refreshing scenes to the mind, than are to be  
 derived from any other quarter. Such have  
 pleasures of their own; substantial and un-  
 mixed; to which others must be strangers:  
 they are acquainted with the delightful sensa-  
 tions of gratitude; with the calm and compo-  
 sure of reliance and confidence, from the as-  
 surance of a presence with them and about  
 them, that whispers succour, safety, guidance,  
 with every necessary supply.

Oh that we had but more attestations here-  
 of from experience! But alas how much the  
 the reverse is the disposition of multitudes!  
 Who instead of conversing with God, *banish*  
 him from their minds; instead of setting him  
 always



always before them, really *affect* to live as if SERM.  
there was no God in the world. Oh! for X.  
which of his glorious excellencies, or his  
numberless favours is he *thus* treated! What  
reason hath our Maker given us to disgust  
him, to shun all converse with him, or to sup-  
press all thoughts of him! The *cause* of this  
must be in *ourselves*. But it is *such* a cause as  
never can be an *excuse*: For, it is either a  
brutal stupidity, contracted through the *disuse*  
of their reason; or a terror with which every  
*deliberate* thought of the divine presence and  
power strikes them, through the *abuse* of their  
reason. This leads them to darken their  
understandings, as well as they can; and to  
keep themselves in an hurry by lower amuse-  
ments, in order to *exclude* him from their  
minds, and *bar* them against occurring  
thoughts of him. But how unparallelled the  
folly and stupidity of such a proceeding!  
What advantage can be proposed by this?  
Is it not quite *childish*, to imagine, that when  
they have shut *their own* eyes, no body  
*sees them*? And doth not their *solicitude* to  
exclude God *from their* thoughts, and the sa-  
tisfaction they take in having done it, betray  
such a foolish childish imagination; whilst,  
though they have banished him from *their*  
own

SERM. *own* view, *his* eyes are at the same time upon  
 X. all *their* ways, and there is no article of their sin,  
 no *inward* disgust and disaffection to him, but  
 what is perfectly known to him? what is then  
 got by such a forgetfulness or alienation of  
 their thoughts from him? Or in what respect  
 are the *issues* of things amended hereby? Should it be said, that they hereby *prevent* many fearful apprehensions and gloomy thoughts. But I pray, what is the *cause*, and whence arises the *necessity* of *excluding* a God from the *human* mind, *in order* to its *peace* and *self-enjoyment*, when it is *in itself* a truth and theme which yields the most substantial satisfaction and support? This question cannot be answered, but by the shame, confusion, and self-reproach, of all to whom it may justly be put.

Let us, my friends, judge of our own devotion and piety by the description which the text gives of it; and labour to come up thereto. For, by thus setting God before us, we shall pass the time of our sojourning here most safely and most comfortably; our minds will acquire a grandeur that will render them *superior* to many things which are wont to tempt and trouble us; we shall, in a word, become so inured to the exercise of admiration,  
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praise and love from our habitual converse SERM.  
with God, as will greatly reconcile us to his X.  
*appointed* way of passing from these more  
transient and interrupted views of him, to  
*that* presence of his, when our contemplations  
shall be fixed, our enjoyment perfect, nor  
shall we *lose* sight of him for ever.



SERM. *own* view, *his* eyes are at the same time upon  
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 { no *inward* disgust and disaffection to him, but  
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praise and love from our habitual converse SERM.  
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*that* presence of his, when our contemplations  
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shall we *lose* sight of him for ever.





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# S E R M O N   X I .



Against Conformity to the WORLD.



ROMANS xii. 2.

*And be not conformed to this World.*

EVERY one who hath made any reflections upon themselves or others, must be very sensible of the power of example. There is a disposition in *our very frame* to be influenced thereby; which we are sure, for that reason, was intended *originally* for our benefit. And where the mind hath been *struck* with an *excellent* pattern, and is *itself prepared*,

SERM. XI.

this

SERM. this *innate* disposition to an imitation, or to be  
 XI. influenced by example, is of great service to the  
 conveying those qualities into us, which we cannot but esteem and admire in a well drawn copy. But this very disposition to imitate examples before us, exposes us also to *hazard* and *danger*, from the numbers of those that are *bad*: and though in the light of reason, one would think they should be found *warning-pieces*, and be beheld as rocks to be *shunned*, yet experience proves that there is too often found an *allurement* and an *attraction* in them, from our *own propensity* to what is evil.

The *prevalency* of impiety and wickedness, when christianity first appeared, rendered the reformation of the world a very improbable thing; and particularly upon the account of its having a general *custom* and *practice* to struggle with, which hath always been found to be more than a match for laws with all their sanctions. And as this was a great obstacle to the power of the gospel in the *conversion* of mankind, so it was a *standing snare* and *temptation* to a *relapse*, with respect to those who by the embracing of christianity had *engaged*, and were by their religion *obliged, not* to conform to the sinful customs of a present evil world. It is true, the state of things and of mankind is amended by the gospel, not only with respect



pect to *light*, but *reformation* too. The world SERM.  
hath been blessed with a greater number of XI.  
examples for piety, righteousness, benevolence  
and every divine and heavenly virtue, since  
the sun of righteousness hath arisen to instruct  
and animate mankind therein: and I *hope*  
*our own* day can furnish us with *many*, who in  
temper and life are not *of the world*, so far as  
a christian *should leave* it, whilst they are in it,  
by a renewed mind and an heavenly conver-  
sation.

But *still* there is *such a degree* of the contra-  
ry in the present day, as with too many un-  
thinking creatures, amounts even to an *autho-  
rity*. Such is the prevailing *genius* and *mode*  
of the age in which we live, as to endanger  
the carrying of many down with a *stream* of  
irreligion and moral corruption. From hence  
is the solemn caution of the Apostle in the  
text, which is a *condemnation* of the thing,  
too suitable and needful for us; "Be not con-  
formed to this world."

By *the world* here is meant the *practices* and  
*manners* of mankind; those which are *general*  
*and reigning*, which are countenanced and fol-  
lowed by a *great majority*. Now concerning  
these, two things are plainly *intimated* by the  
Apostle, though not expressed, upon which the  
caution in the text is *grounded*, and from  
S 3 whence

SERM. whence our *obligation* to regard it is very  
 XI. strong and indisputable—They are—That it is  
 { a great corruption of principles and of man-  
 ners that *prevails* in the world—And that there  
 is a great proneness in *others* to be corrupted  
 and carried away therewith, purely from the  
*prevalency of it.*

I. It is a *corruption* of manners that *prevails*  
 in the world. It *might* possibly be more ge-  
 neral when the Apostle wrote, than it is at  
 present: for whoever reads his own account as  
 to Jew and Gentile in the beginning of this  
 epistle, will hardly be able to imagine a more  
 degenerate state than is there described.

I take no pleasure in reflecting upon the  
 looseness and debauchery; the rioting and in-  
 temperance; the wantoning in prophaneness;  
 and the glorying in what is shameful and scan-  
 dalous, which is become too much a *mode* and  
*fashion in practice*; nor on the behaviour of  
*others*, who if they are not guilty themselves  
 of the *acts*, yet, through the power of fashion,  
*countenance* and *encourage* those who are. I  
 think every heart that is *meerly human*, must  
 derive a very painful sensation from seeing and  
 hearing such things from day to day. I am  
 very *willing* to indulge an hope, that there are  
 many *fair* and *bright* examples, who lie con-  
 cealed in the shade, which true goodness often  
 affects,



affects, both for its peace and safety; who SERM.  
in the day of *revelation* and *separation*, shall XI.  
for number amount to a *cloud of witnesses*.  
But nevertheless is it not *wickedness* that *doth*  
*prevail*? Is it not *the broad* way that leads to  
destruction, in which *the many* go? Is not the  
*corruption*, not only of christian, but, of *na-*  
*tural* principles, so general, as to *endanger* the  
infection of those who are the best established  
in virtue; the undermining any foundation  
that can be laid by the most pious and prudent  
education; and the extirpating the earliest and  
strongest impressions that all concurring ad-  
vantages can make upon the mind? This is  
not a libel, or groundless slander, upon man-  
kind. I wish it was: but it is what every  
one who is not blinded with vice, or burrow-  
ing in the earth, must *see*; what every one  
who is not actually *gone* into the tents of  
wickedness must *lament*; and what every one,  
who is not *strictly* upon his *guard*, will *expe-*  
*rience to his cost*.

I know very well, that many who are deep-  
ly concerned in the observation, are ready from  
an *affectation* of being thought persons of *taste*,  
to express their scorn at the mention of it, as  
*common place*, an old story, as what *hath been*  
the complaint of all ages, and will always be  
so. And what then? is it not *still* a truth;

SERM. and what *humanity*, where there is any, will

XI. account a *melancholy* truth too? I must be so free as to say, that none can *slight* or *disregard* it, but such as lend their hand to *maintain* the sad truth, or who are in the greatest *danger* of doing so, by a *conformity* and imitation of such examples. Which is the second thing intimated and implied in this apostolick warning, viz.

II. That there is a *great proneness* in mankind to conform to *the general course and way of the world*, purely and meerly upon that account.

Was reason the umpire in this case; was there that *thought* and *consideration* which might be expected to be found in creatures distinguished by those qualities, we should naturally conclude, that so great a *deformity* as vice is *in itself*, and so great a slavery and *misery* as it is in its *consequences*, would so shock the *untainted* beholder when it is become *general*, as to be an *antidote* instead of an attractive, or allurements. But we see it is far otherwise; though it is intirely owing to the *laying aside* reason and consideration. From hence we are in danger of following a *multitude*, as a multitude, though to the doing of evil. General usage has too commonly the force and influence of an *authority*. Numbers  
seem



*seem* to have right on their side. Fashion and custom are *thought* not only to countenance mankind, but to *bear them out* and *justify* them in *any* thing. So enslaving a tyranny hath this over mankind, that *for the sake* of herding with the *many*, we daily see some surrendring their reason and understanding, breaking through the ties of honour, friendship, humanity, and natural affection, as well as piety; making entire shipwreck of *them* as well as of a good conscience: nay, even the vicious *themselves*, we see will *leave* a *vice*, or betray but little inclination to it, when become *unfashionable*. The general spread of any vice very soon takes away all governing apprehensions of evil *in* it, or *from* it. When it is *rare*, it appears *as it is*, deformed, shameful, and monstrous; but when it becomes *common*, its familiarity abates the fear of committing it; and hides both the deformity and danger of it from the mind.

But there is nothing I apprehend, which contributes more to our falling in with the general course and modes of the world, than *the fear* of what is sure to be *met with from it*, should we dare to *dissent*. This will certainly be returned with *ridicule* and *reproach*, and draw the joint *scorn* and *derision* of the multitude upon such a one; which is the attacking one

SERM.  
XI.

SERM. one of the most *sensible* passions, if I may so  
 XI. express it, of human nature, and what pre-  
 vails most in the *best*, and that is *shame*. Now  
 this is an uneasiness and pain of the mind  
 arising from a sense of what is unbecoming,  
 foolish, and contemptible. And though *rea-*  
*son is sufficient*, if but duly exercised, to satisfy  
 the mind, that it is *impossible* that there should  
 be any thing really shameful in virtue and  
 goodness, yet it is no *easy* thing to sustain a ge-  
 neral scorn and ridicule ; to stand up for virtue  
 when set in a ridiculous light, or not to be  
 greatly influenced by a torrent of censure and  
 derision. How many have been corrupted  
 meerly through a fear of being laughed at!  
 How many have surrendred themselves to  
*fashionable* vices, and have contracted an *epi-*  
*demical distemper*, purely to avoid the reproach  
 and sneers of a multitude on the account of  
 the most *honourable* singularity ! Though this  
 is a very false modesty, and a *truly* ridiculous  
 weakness, yet it is *very common* : it is that to  
 which many may ascribe their ruin, and by  
 which they have brought upon themselves the  
 scorn and contempt of their *own minds*, which  
 in such a case is *justly* merited, and infinitely  
*harder to bear* than the *united* animadversions  
 and censures of the world. But whatever  
*proneness* there may be in mankind, whatever  
 tempta-



temptations they may be under, to a conformity SERM.  
to the world, in its general course, yet it is by XI.  
*no means allowable in the christian.* The text  
is a *standing* prohibition. Herein we must  
*dissent* at all hazards. We are not to be *fashi-*  
*oned* according to this world, so the word is  
rendered, 1 Pet. i. 14. but on the contrary, we  
are to be *transformed*, or as the word is render-  
ed sometimes, we are to be *transfigured*, or  
*changed into another* form or manner of appear-  
ance from them.

This brings me to the consideration of the  
prohibition itself.

From the weakness of some judgments,  
and their liableness to mistake it, and from the  
mischief that may follow some mistakes both  
as to the comfort of life, and the credit of re-  
ligion, it is necessary to observe;

That we are not hereby forbid *all* conformi-  
ty to a general mode and practice, *because* some  
of the *worst* of mankind may be in it. There  
are things indifferent in their own nature;  
others which render us agreeable to one ano-  
ther, which evidence a good nature, and are  
justly deemed articles of civility and good  
manners. We cannot suppose that such things  
*as these* are absolutely forbidden us, *though* they  
should be generally *practised* and *esteemed by*  
*the world.* We are not required to be *per-*  
*verse*

SERM. *verse* or *obstinate*; to hamper ourselves, or to

XI. *affect* a singularity in *trifles*. No: the *noncon-*  
 formity here enjoined, respects *those* sentiments  
 and practices which are sinful *in themselves*, or  
 which have an *immediate tendency* to what is  
 so. In *such* things we are not to conform to  
 others, though they are a *multitude*, who  
 practice them, or though such things are be-  
 come *popular and general* customs.

Having thus prepared my way; I would

I. Consider the *import* of the prohibition in  
 the text.

II. The reasons upon which it is ground-  
 ed.

I. Let us attend to the *import* of the pro-  
 hibition; or to what is *actually* forbidden  
 therein. *Be not conformed to this world.*

And I apprehend that the three following  
 things are what the Apostle had *mainly* in his  
 view in this prohibition; by our conscientious  
 observance of which we shall effectually an-  
 swer his design therein.

“ Do not take your rules of *judging* from  
 “ the world, or form your *sentiments* of things  
 “ by theirs—Do not take your rules of *acting*  
 “ from them, or model your *manners* by theirs—  
 “ And, centre not in their *aims* and *end*, or  
 “ terminate not your *views* in what bounds  
 theirs.”

I would



I would insist a little upon each of these. SERM.  
Be not conformed to this world: that is, XI.

1. Do not take your rules of *judging* from them, or form your *sentiments* of things by theirs.

It is obvious to every one that is acquainted with the procedure of the human mind, that our *stated* practice is influenced by our *opinions* and *apprehensions* of things. The leading step in the conversion of the heart to God is described by *opening the eyes*; whereby is meant, that such are brought to a *just sense* and *estimate* of things, Acts xxvi. 18. And whenever any *depart* from the divine commandments, it is greatly owing to the suppression or corruption of the *sentiments* of their minds. If we look into the world we must see, that there is a *mode* in *opinions* as well as in dress: that the generality have *usurped a right* of stamping what *names they please* upon things, that as far as in them lies they may change the *nature* of them; both for the keeping their own consciences quiet, and deceiving and ensnaring others. They call evil good, and good evil: They clap the *ridicule* upon what is *intrinsically* sacred, and disguise what is most scandalous by reputable terms. Religion is degraded under the stile of superstition and hypocrisy; seriousness by that of ill-nature; and

SERM. and conscience by scrupulosity and preciseness.

XI. In the popular and fashionable judgment it is undeniable, that prophaneness is dignified by the stile of wit ; impudence, by that of freedom ; licentiousness, by that of liberty ; intemperance and madness, by the terms of cheerfulness and enjoyment ; craft and deceit, by that of wisdom ; and a contempt of laws both civil and sacred, by that of courage and greatness of mind. *This* is the freedom of *thought* which the generality claim ; even the *accommodating* their *sentiments* of things to their designs ; the *bending* their *opinions* to their inclinations and interests ; and the *dress*ing up any thing to themselves either as right or wrong, manly or mean, reputable or reproachful, as it shall best agree with their resolved scheme of practice. By this artifice evil *passes current* for good, and good for evil ; virtues for vices, and vices for virtues ; minds are abused with false notions in the *great concerns* of life ; and mankind, one after another, suffer their sentiments to be corrupted, by an *implicit* faith in the *fashionable* names which are given to things, by those who *regard* neither good nor evil, and who endeavour thereby to *confound* them. They must be *entire* strangers to the world, or belie their very senses who  
are



are ignorant of this, or shall dispute the **SERM.**  
facts. **XI.**

But now, christians, shall *we* affect to follow such a mode? Shall we subscribe to such an abuse of language? Or surrender our natural *sentiments* to this standard? Shall we blindly and implicitly swallow such *notions* as these, *because* they are *fashionable* and *prevailing*, though they are in *opposition* to evidence as plain as that *of sense*, and though in themselves they betray a stupidity or perverseness as notorious, as if they were to call darkness light, and light darkness. Isaiah v. 20. The prohibition in the text is in effect the *same* thing, as *requiring* us to *dispute* this usurped right with the world as to the opinions and representation of things which they would palm upon us. It is a *call upon us*, amidst all the authority of numbers, and the senseless empty plea of *mode* and *fashion*, to *examine* and judge whether that be really groundless, reproachful, contemptible, and trifling, which *they* so stile; or be not abused, misrepresented, and vilified; and whether the notions they have of wisdom, greatness, honour, and happiness, are *just* and *true*; or rather whether they are not each of them *the very reverse*. Upon impartial enquiry *so* would it be found. Let us then resolve we will not tamely follow, as the animal doth,  
the

SERM. the herd, or the multitude, in a matter of  
 XI. such consequence, nor leave *them* to model  
 { our opinions of things, as to their truth or  
 falshood, their importance or worthlessness. If  
 we do, we shall soon come to glory in our  
 shame, and to be ashamed of our glory.

2. Do not take your rules of *acting* from  
 the world, or model your *manners* by theirs:  
 This I think is included in the prohibition,  
 “ Be not conformed to this world.”

Such errors in *opinions* and *sentiments* of  
*things*, as under the former head, by natural  
 consequence, lead to equal errors in *conduct*,  
 and pervert the course of the actions on which  
 the great issues of life and death depend, and  
 by which they are governed. And so every  
 one, who knows the world, *sees* that it is.  
 For what is *the general measure* and standard of  
 good and evil, but inclination and passion, ap-  
 petite and interest? what is *consulted* but these  
 in the forming of their projects and designs?  
 and what but power in the prosecution of  
 them? *Right* and *wrong* signify nothing more  
 with the multitude but what pleases or dis-  
 pleases, what gratifies or disgusts themselves.  
 The directions and restraints of reason and  
 religion are discarded as invasions upon liberty;  
 and an *ability* for the freest enjoyment of plea-  
 sure is deemed a *licence* for it, and a *justification*  
 in



in the letting out the heart to *any* joy. They SERM.  
live by rote, by giddy and wanton humour: XI.  
their *notions* and *principles* being the fashiona-  
ble ones of their neighbourhood, their *course*  
and the tenour of their behaviour takes that  
shape, which the *chance* of their conversation  
gives it. They *chop* upon the entertainments  
that offer themselves, and pursue those which  
are in vogue; without enquiring *what they are*,  
or *whither they tend*. They consult only the  
*present* gratification, and the *stamp* of polite-  
ness and taste, that the most unthinking and  
heedless have given them, without any regard  
to consequences or futurity. Nay, may I not  
add; it is so *common* a thing that it looks like an  
*established maxim* with mankind, "That, if by  
" the kind providence of God they are rais-  
" ed above the drudgery of life, above  
" a dependance on their fellow-creatures,  
" they are *thereby* rendered lawless *as to God*;  
" that it gives them a dispensation from all  
" regards of him, and is a cancelling of all  
" relation and obligation to him."

Should we make such creatures as these our  
presidents, or model our behaviour by such  
rules as these of the world are, should we not  
be miserably misled? Our actions would be  
little *else* but the brutish fallies of fool-  
ish passions; our lives little *better* than the  
VOL. II. T wandrings

SERM. wandrings and ramblings of deluded and deluding imaginations ; and we should be continually tossed and driven about by the capricious rules of fancy and fashion.

Some may be very ready to acknowledge, that *all* conformity to the world, in *down-right vicious* practices is criminal, and most justly forbidden ; but in things that are *innocent* and *lawful in themselves*, they may think that they are at *full* liberty, and are under *no* restraint, notwithstanding this or any other prohibition of the like kind in the gospel. That in the acknowledgment of their *innocency* and *lawfulness*, there is a *warrant* and a *licence* for their conformity to the world therein.

I think this is a matter of very considerable moment, and ought to be carefully discussed and settled in our minds, if we would not be self-deceivers, and thereby self-destroyers. For it is very apparent, that amongst those who have *any* regard to God, *any* tenderness of conscience, or who in *any* degree attend to the good or evil of their actions, *lawful* things are *their greatest snares*. The very *term* is apt to throw them off their guard ; to render them secure, as if they could be in *no danger* from *these* things ; and to make them regardless of caution and reproof. Criminal excesses in *these* things do not fly in their faces and wound  
their



their minds, as those which are *absolutely un-* SERM.  
*lawful* in their *own nature* would do. For XI.  
 these reasons, they are in the greater danger  
 from what is in its own nature, *allowed* and  
*innocent*. I would therefore deliver my senti-  
 ments upon this head, and with respect to these  
 things, in as plain and concise a manner as I  
 can.

I have already admitted, that there are  
 things which in *themselves* are of an *indifferent*  
 nature, that is, which are in *particular* neither  
 commanded nor forbidden of God; which  
 we are left at liberty to do or forbear, as incli-  
 nation or civil prudence may lead us. And  
 these things are in their *own nature*, neither  
 better nor worse for their being *generally* prac-  
 tised and esteemed by the world. But then  
 we should remember, that these *innocent* things  
 have their *bounds*, *within which only* they are  
*innocent*. The gospel hath not informed us of  
 the *precise* and *exact* point where the lawfulness  
 of these things end, and where their un-  
 lawfulness commences. Its design is not to  
 tell us *how near* we may *approach* to sin, and  
*not sin*. This is by no means a *desirable* thing,  
 from the apparent hazard which would attend  
 it. It would not be consistent with the *real*  
 design of the Gospel, which is to teach us to  
*deny* our sensitive appetites and inclinations,

SERM. and to *abstain* from all *appearance* of evil. Or

XI. should we *wish* to know this, in order to indulge ourselves to the *very utmost* bounds of what is lawful, it would betray a *disposition* very unlike the christian. Several of the sins which the Gospel of Christ condemns; and which it assures us will exclude from heaven at last, consist in the *abuse* of *lawful* things, in an *excess* therein. *Wine* is lawful, and a *feast* is so: but is there not an *use* of these things which denominates us *drunkards* and *gluttons*? *Company* is not only innocent, but a relief to the mind by unbending it: but *may* not the love and practice hereof be carried, is it not so in a multitude of instances, to a neglect of business? not only to the *not providing* for an household, but to the *consuming* of their support and subsistence, to a waste and wantoning away of life and time? and to an unavoidable neglect of plain Duty? And is it not *then* absolutely criminal? Suppose therefore that you *intend* to follow the world in nothing but what is *lawful* and *innocent*, yet if *custom* and *fashion* be the *chief* consideration and motive of acting with you, you can never answer for yourselves, that you shall *stop there*, unless it be *the fashion so to do*: you must and will follow your *principle* wherever it will carry you. It is but a *degree*, a narrow line which  
in



in many cases divides between a lawful and a SERM.  
sinful action. If we then will go to the ut- XI.  
*most bounds* of what is lawful, it is great odds  
against us but we *break* those bounds; if in  
our conformity to the world, we *confine our*  
*regard* to the *lawfulness* of the things them-  
selves that are fashionable, we shall surely  
conform much further than it may be we *at*  
*first* intended; and the taking *this* liberty,  
even with things that are *innocent*, will *termi-*  
*nate* in licentiousness, which borders closely  
upon it.

There are some *other* things, the practice of  
which have the sanction of custom and fashi-  
on, which are more *suspicious*, though they  
cannot be pronounced *down right sins*. Such is  
the swarm of modern entertainments, after  
which the world goes, as it were by general  
consent; and which many follow *meerly* for  
that stupid reason; because it is *customary* and  
*fashionable*. What now if these cannot be  
termed *absolutely* unlawful, though I think I  
could prove that *some* of them *are* so, yet is  
*that* the *only* thing to be considered by the  
christian? will that *alone justify* such in their  
*free* indulgencies therein, or in their conform-  
ing therein to the world? Surely it will not.  
The Apostle hath directed us to take another  
circumstance into consideration, *besides the law-*  
fulness

SERM. *fulness* of the thing ; and that is, the *expediency* of it. I Cor. vi. 12. He hath bid us thereby to ask *ourselves*, not only whether it be *lawful*, but whether it be *consistent with*, yea *conducive* to our own advantage and benefit, our safety and happiness? Whether it be *reconcilable* with, yea, whether it contribute to the great end of our christian profession? and *agree* with the general rules of conduct which we are under, of promoting the glory of God, the salvation of our own souls, and the credit and spread of our holy religion? However harmless therefore things may be in *their own nature*, however fashionable and prevailing they may be in the world, yet when they have a very *sensible tendency* to *weaken* the powers and principles of religion, to sensua-  
 lize the heart, to corrupt the relish of the soul, to open a pass for temptations to enter and succeed, by promoting lightness and vanity ; it is certain a conformity to the *free* indulgencies of the world in these things, is *forbidden*. What if the poison be not *rank*, so as *immediately* to destroy ? yet if it *be* poison, though it work but *slowly*, as the things I am speaking of, when made any thing like a *business* of, will surely prove, their *innocency* is at an end ; and a restraint, even what is *next* to a total denial,  
 is



is called for, if we would avoid just censure and shame, and down-right evil. SERM.  
XI.

Nor let any palliate and apologize for themselves, in their conformity to the world in *these* things, from what hath been sometimes urged, “that many *good* people join with others “in these things, and that they only take the “liberty that *they* do.” It may be too true, that those who in the judgment of charity are accounted good, do conform to the practices in vogue, which are of *no good* report. But are the *things themselves* ever the better or more justifiable for that? Is the behaviour of those we stile *good*, *our rule* and *standard*? Should we not, in following the very best, in many things frequently depart from God’s commandments? Sure I am, this conformity of theirs to the world is no *evidence* of *their* goodness, any more than a *means* of *promoting* it. The question is not, what the good *do*, but what they *ought* to do: it is not what character they *bear*, but whether they *act* in character. Then only can we plead the example of the *best*, or take our measures from them, when they *maintain* their character, by their *dissenting* from the world in those things, whereby they are to be *distinguished* from it, and are *required* by the great, the only lawgiver to *practice* singularity.

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I might

SERM.

XI.

I might add under this head, that we are forbidden by the text, to take our measures from the world as to *religion itself*. Therein also we are not to model our behaviour by theirs. It is very evident, that what there is of it amongst the *generality* is taken upon *trust*, without any consideration, or enquiry of their own, whether it is the religion of Jesus, or only the custom of the world : and what their *neighbours are, they are contented to be*. Many things are ranged by the world under the head of religion, and stamp't with that name, which have *nothing* of it in them, and *these* have the chief stress for importance laid upon them. *This* hath its *mode* and *fashion* as well as other things ; and that is the sanction of what is right and true. How *little* of *that*, a *great deal* of which is *worth nothing*, is deemed abundantly *sufficient* ! and if any appear to lay a stress upon what is *pure* and *undefiled* religion before God, upon that of *the heart*, how general is the censure passed upon them of being superstitious, and of making more ado than needs ! Is there not then a just demand for our dissent from the world with respect to the practice of religion itself, whilst there is so little knowledge of it, where there is any pretension to it ; amidst a *prevailing* indifferency towards it ; the too general acting a part in it,



it ; and whilst mankind ask leave of their inclinations, their pleasures, and their humours, even as to what they shall admit and practice as such ? But, SERM.  
XI.

3. Another thing included in the prohibition of the text is this : Center not in the aims and ends which the generality propose to themselves ; nor terminate your views in what bounds theirs. Be not conformed to the world *in this*.

Amongst several divisions which our blessed Lord hath made of mankind, this is one, the *children of this world*, and the *children of light*. Luke xvi. 8. And the immediate ground of the distinction between these is, from the context, plainly this, the difference in their *grand end*. *The children of this world* are such as have made the good of this world their *governing* aim ; who, if not in so many words, yet by their dispositions, and the tenor and tendency of their pursuits, have chosen a felicity and portion in this world. Pleasure, riches, or honour, are the principle objects of their affections : these are uppermost with them, and have the most influence upon them ; *herein* they center ; *thither* their thoughts and the faculties of their souls are directed ; *on these* they are set as their *principal* concern and *main* interest ; and in the attain-

SERM. attainment of them, upon their abounding in  
 XI. them, they find their *chief* joy.

It is not to be supposed but the Apostle had this in view, when he lays down the general prohibition in the text, since this is so *eminent* a characteristic of the men of the world, as they are *distinguished* in disposition and behaviour *from the christian*. We are in no small danger of being infected by the popularity, politeness, and prevalency hereof. The stream, to be sure, is very strong this way; and upon these things are the hearts of mankind generally set, as the sources of their felicity. But be their numbers ever so great, the taste ever so modish, and the standard ever so popular, we are *forbid* to follow them; or to admit *them* to model *our* minds and manners, as to the choice of our chief good and end. We are required *not* to place *our* felicity and satisfaction where they place *theirs*, either in worldly possessions or sensitive gratifications: not to give up our reason and experience to the dictates of their blinded minds and enslaving passions; not to surrender our faith to their fancies; nor to limit our ambition by their low and grovling relishes and views. We are not to join the popular cry, or say with *the many* who are *given up* to the entertainments of the animal life, "Who will shew us any such good."



good :” nor suffer these to engross our thoughts and affections, as if they were the *end*, the *very life*, of life ; to the stifling the better inclinations of our souls, the dooming them to drudgery and sordid abasement, and to an everlasting disappointment, which if followed they will infallibly do.

SERM.  
XI.

These things, I think, are included in the prohibition of the text ; which, however hard a saying it may appear, is grounded on the most substantial and undeniable reasons. But these will be the subject of another discourse. All I shall further add at present shall be under this general entreaty.

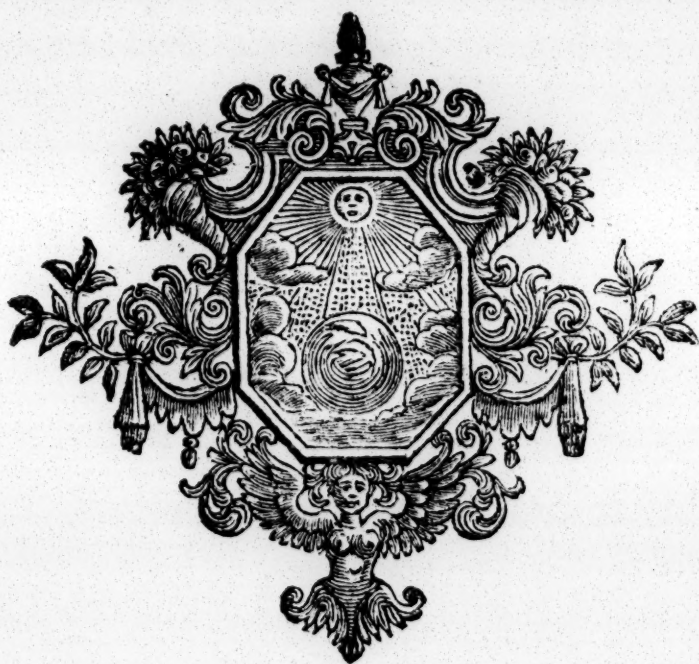
That we improve what hath been said for our own caution and warning.

I believe there is not a thinking person in the nation, but hath taken notice of, nor one that hath any of the christian benevolence towards human kind, but hath *bewailed*, the many devices formed for the corrupting the minds and the manners of mankind, and in what shoals they are frequented and encouraged : infomuch that it is, *in a manner*, literally true, *the world is gone after them*. This encreases the *temptation* with respect to the *few*, and who have not yet allowed themselves in such *indulgencies* ; though from what has been said I hope it appears, that numbers can give

SERM. *no sanction* to the practice ; nor mode or fashion yield the *least plea* or *argument* for a conformity therein. Hereupon I would address to you, in the words of Moses to the Israelites with respect to the corrupt usages of their neighbours, "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them." Deut. xii. 30. What I have offered was *intended* to improve your minds in the justest sentiments of those things, which through ignorance or inattention have been snares to thousands ; and to strengthen your resolutions against solicitations from others, or the stream of popular practice, to which many an unthinking person hath surrendered to their ruin. Certainly, if in *any* cases we are *not* to be conformed to the world, it must be in *those* which are sinful *in themselves* ; or which from their very nature *dispose* and *prepare* the mind *for those* that are *so*, and render us an easy prey to temptations. It is not presently to be imagined how many vices would at once be cured and prevented, how many snares and temptations would be at once defeated and weakened, were but our affection and regard to the pleasures, enjoyments, and sentiments of the world duely regulated. To this then let us apply ourselves by seriously consulting and attending to our own experience, and the attestation of all ages, as to the empti-



emptiness and uncertainty of all that is wont SERM.  
to captivate and enslave us; and by frequent XI.  
converses with that all perfect world, and that  
eternal life to which we stand related, and  
where only real safety, enjoyment, and felicity  
is to be found.



...and ...  
...and ...  
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# S E R M O N XII.



On the same S U B J E C T.



R O M A N S xii. 2.

*And be not conformed to this world.*

I have already observed to you, that there SERM.  
are two things plainly *intimated* by the XII.  
Apostle in these words, though not *expressed*,  
upon which the prohibition in the text is  
*grounded*, and from whence our obligation to  
regard it is indisputable. They are,

That it is a corruption of principles and  
manners which *prevails* in the world.

And

SERM. And that there is a great *proneness* in others  
 XII. to be corrupted and carried away therewith,  
 purely from the *prevalency* of it.

However *remarkable* and *peculiar* the age and time when the Apostle wrote might be for these things, I am sure they too truly describe the *present* state of things, and render the Apostle's caution very seasonable, necessary, and important—I have proposed

I. To consider the import of the prohibition in the text. Be not conformed to this world.

To prevent mistakes which might needlessly distress some minds, and occasion reflections upon religion, I observed; That we are not forbid *all* conformity to a general mode and practice, because some of the *worst* of mankind might be in it. Since there are many things *indifferent* in their own nature; others which render us agreeable to one another, and are justly deemed articles of civility and decency, we cannot suppose that such things are *absolutely* forbidden us, though they should be generally practised and esteemed by the world. We are not required to be perverse or obstinate, to affect to differ from others, or to be singular in trifles. No: the nonconformity to the world which is here enjoined respects those things which are *sinful in themselves*, or have an *immediate tendency* to what is so; *such things*



things as are *direct* violations of the divine SERM. precepts, or such as in their *natural* influence, XII. are found by general experience to *introduce* a { disregard and contempt of the divine authority.

To *such* things I think the prohibition in the text extends, though they should be the practice of the *multitude*, or though they should be popular and general customs.

This being premised, I proceeded to consider the *import of the Apostle's prohibition*. And I mentioned three things which I thought were included in it. viz.

Do not take your rules of *judging* from the world, or form your *sentiments* of things by *theirs*. Do not take your rules of *acting* from *them*, or model your *manners* by *theirs*: And, center not in their *aims* and *end*, or, terminate not your *views* in what bounds *theirs*.

These I endeavoured to open and illustrate, both with respect to things which are *sinful*, and those which are *lawful*, in their own nature.

I proceed now as I proposed,

II. To lay before you the *reasons* on which this solemn prohibition is grounded, and the evident obligations we are under to regard it.

SERM. And the first which I shall mention is suggested by the connection of the words with the context, viz.

XII.

That it is indispensibly necessary as an evidence of a religious character.

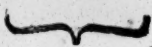
The Apostle having in the preceding verse, in a very solemn manner, *exhorted* the Romans to devote and give up themselves to the service of God as their deliberate choice, immediately enters his *protest*, in the words of the text, *against* conformity to the world. And to this *latter*, I think his earnest entreaty annexed to the *former*, equally belongs: as if he had said, *I beseech* you, in order to your engaging in the service of God, and your adhering thereto, that you guard against a conformity to the world. What construction can be put upon this, but what offers itself at first sight? viz. That such a devotedness to the divine service, and a conformity to the world, are *absolutely inconsistent*; that what is *done* by the former, is *undone* by the latter; that what is *avowed* by the former is *disclaimed* by the latter; and what is *engaged* for by the one, is *revoked* by the other. What *notion* can we have of a religious character, or what can the presenting ourselves to God as a sacrifice import? but our submitting our judgments to be formed by *his* declarations; the subjecting our inclinations and passions to *his* restraints and limitations;



mitations ; the using and employing our gifts SERM.  
and blessings by *his* directions ; and resolving XII.  
the *reason* of our actions and *tenor* of our con-  
versation into a conformity to his will, and in-  
to an obedience to his laws. And doth not  
every one see, that this is reversed and contra-  
dicted by our following the maxims, motives,  
and measures, which prevailingly influence  
and govern the world ? The children of this  
world, and the children of light, are charac-  
ters *essentially* opposite to one another, Luke  
xvi. 8. Amongst the several descriptions  
which our Lord hath given of *his disciples*,  
whereby they are distinguishable from others,  
this is one, “ that they are not of the world.”  
They are of a very different spirit and dispo-  
sition ; they have imbibed very different sen-  
timents ; they are influenced by other motives ;  
they live by other rules ; and are pursuing an  
interest quite wide from those which actuate  
and govern the generality, John xvii. 16. The  
christian cannot be like himself ; nor the dis-  
ciple be, as every disciple ought to be, like his  
Master, but by a mind and practice greatly  
superior to that which prevails in the world ;  
and in those respects too, wherein one *reasonable*  
creature is most *eminently* distinguished from a-  
nother.

SERM. — I would not knowingly make more sins and  
 XII. duties than Christ hath made : I would not  
 { infringe upon the liberty which he hath allowed his followers, or which is consistent with the rules and the demands of the gospel ; since I would take that liberty myself. But I very much fear, that many who would be deemed Christians, and who wear the external badges of that relation to Christ, allow themselves in such a latitude in practice, in such *strains* of liberty, and such *stretches* of compliance with those of the *opposite* character, as is by no means reconcilable with christianity itself. Instead of rectifying and raising their sentiments, taste, and practice by the lofty and ennobling doctrines and precepts of their religion, they study to debase and sink their religion to a favourable indulgence of their sordid inclinations, and to level it to the humours and modes of the world. How can any one who knows the Gospel ; who desires to be ruled by it ; or expects to be judged by it, ever bring himself to believe, that *aloue*, which amounts to a *life*, of pleasure, is consistent with the care of the soul or with the love of God, 2 Tim. iii. 4 ? That the following the multitude, is the way that leads to life ? the road to heaven ? when the very *best* of our acts are *meerly innocent* amusements and gratifications



fications of the senses, *who* can think that *this* SERM.  
is the working out of our own salvation? or XII.  
that walking in the way of our own hearts,   
and in the sight of our own eyes, or by the  
fashionable customs of the age, is ever to be  
reconciled with the self-denial, mortification,  
watchfulness, and purity, which christianity  
requires?

To add no more proof under this head:  
we are assured, “ that the friendship of this  
world is enmity to God ; that whosoever there-  
fore *will* be a friend of the world, is an ene-  
my of God.” James iv. 4. that is, Such are  
the principles, maxims, and ways of life,  
which prevail amongst mankind, that those  
who are resolved to keep upon good terms  
with them, or purchase their regards by a  
conformity to their customs and practices, do  
by that very thing evidence a destitution of  
love to God, and infallibly deprive themselves  
of his to them. From all this I think it is indis-  
putable, that our obedient regard to the injunc-  
tion in the text, is of as much importance as  
our religious or christian character : since it is  
*that* way to be illustrated and evidenced, as it  
is distinguishing at present, or as ever it be ad-  
mitted as genuine at last.

Secondly, Another reason upon which this  
prohibition in the text is grounded is this, That by

SERM. our conforming to the world in any sinful  
XII. practices, or in those customs which naturally  
lead thereto, we promote the cause of vice,  
and contribute to its greater prevalency.

The abounding of iniquity is a very powerful cause, though it never can be a justifiable reason, for the weakening and cooling the zeal of others. It affects the very *principle*, and consequently the profession of religion. The greater the numbers, the more general the mode and practice, the greater is its corrupting influence found to be, from a kind of authority and licence, which it is deemed to carry in it, and from the encreased difficulty of bearing up against the stream. All sinful compliances and conformities, especially by those who avow different principles and make a different profession, discourage the hearts and weaken the hands of the real friends of religion. They render it more difficult for such to bear their testimony against iniquity; they sully the lustre of their religion; and furnish the vicious with occasions of emboldening and hardening them in their wickedness. We certainly recommend to others the principles and rules of life which our conversation evidences: and when these are the same with those of the generality, when these are fashionable, this gives our example a very considerable weight and influence. I think it would  
be



be a very benevolent as well as a proper thing for SERM.  
christians, since it is what our religion teaches XII.  
us, with respect to some things that may not be  
absolutely criminal in themselves, but have  
been found by abundant facts to be fatal in  
their consequences, to ask ourselves under an  
inclination to frequent and follow them, Do  
not I by this conformity of mine countenance  
the vitious? Do I not encourage and contribute  
to the support of those persons and those means,  
which have had a considerable hand in the  
general corruption and depravation of our man-  
ners? May not *my* example lead *others* to think  
that they may lawfully venture as far as I do?  
May they not make me a *president*, and plead  
*my* practice as a colour and warrant for *theirs*?  
whilst *they*, venturing with weaker reason or  
stronger passions than *mine*, are decoyed and  
ensnared into downright sin; and I have this  
melancholy reflection, “that they were intro-  
duced therein by *my* example.”

Let it be remembered, that I do not say,  
nor can it be justly drawn from what I have  
said, “that we are obliged to abridge ourselves  
“ of every lawful thing, by which another  
“ may possibly be led, and emboldened to  
“ sin.” This were to make life a miserable  
slavery, and in a manner to cut us off from  
every thing from whence the comfort of life  
results:

SERM. results: because there is nothing so innocent and  
 XII. harmless but a corrupted mind and an heart set  
 upon evil, may abuse and pervert to its own hurt,  
 What I have said is only this: that as to those  
 things that are lawful in themselves, and where  
 we are left at liberty, we should not only con-  
 sider their lawfulness as to ourselves, but, if  
 there be any apparent *probability*, that by the  
 use of our liberty in any particular way, we  
 shall hurt our neighbour's soul, and thereby  
 encourage and promote vice, it is benevolent  
 and kind to our neighbour, it is an instance of  
 the love which we owe to him, by our chris-  
 tianity, not to use our liberty that way, how-  
 ever customary or fashionable it be to do so.

And if we are not to conform to the usages  
 and customs of the world, which are in them-  
 selves innocent, when we have reason to be-  
 lieve that our conforming thereto will subserve  
 the cause of vice in any, or be an occasion of  
 emboldening any in the transgressing the divine  
 laws; surely it must be a very strong argu-  
 ment where there is *real* religion, against com-  
 plying with any absolutely *criminal* customs,  
 how general soever, that it is lending our help-  
 ing hand to support and advance the kingdom  
 of the devil, and so far propagating and per-  
 petuating vice from one generation to another;  
 so that the prevalency of vitious principles,  
 sentiments,



sentiments, and practices, is so far from being SERM.  
a reason *for* a conformity thereto, that it is an XII.  
eternal reason *against* it; since every one who  
embraces those opinions, and joins in that con-  
duct, strengthens the cause of wickedness,  
and establishes it in the world; helps to  
transmit it to posterity; and whilst with  
the most impious mockery he *daily prays*,  
that the will of God may be done on earth as  
it is done in heaven, he at the *same time* is *contri-*  
*buting all* he can, that there may be *no more*  
obedience, honour, and homage on earth,  
than there is in *hell*.

Thirdly, No reason can be assigned for a conformity to the world in any of their sinful customs and practices, which our own impartial minds will admit as our justification.

The argument and motive which the text intimates, as more especially influencing our falling in with a general practice, is its being general: and as I have already observed, we are prone to be prevailed upon hereby, and purely from hence to imbibe principles, to subscribe to maxims, and to follow examples, which have the sanction of fashion and custom on their side. But still I affirm there is nothing of real argument or solid reason in this; there is nothing in it that can in the least vindicate such a conformity to a person's own conscience,

SERM. conscience; and of this I would make every  
XII. one a judge. For,

1. The nature of things and actions cannot be in the least affected by the sentiments and practice of mankind.

Whatever they think or do, it can have no influence upon right or wrong, upon wisdom or folly, upon good or evil. If it could, it would be something. Or if these things were intirely governed by the fancies of men, and were the one or the other as the general voice of mankind, or the custom of the country pronounced them to be, there would be some plea for embracing popular opinions, and falling in with general practice. But I'll venture to say, no one, retaining reason, could ever bring himself to believe this; or if he should set about the establishing such a persuasion in his own mind, he could never retain it, but would often be charged with lying, from his own conscience. If then there are truths that are founded in the very nature of things; if there are actions intrinsically good and essentially evil, they are eternally and unchangeably so: nothing can impair or affect them. What if the denial of an existing God, an ever-living Inspector, Lawgiver, and Judge, should become the prevailing fashionable opinion? What if it should be the current sentiment of the



the nation or of the world, “ that God seeth SERM.  
“ us not ; that he takes no notice of any thing XII.  
“ done below ; that he hath abandoned and {  
“ forsaken the earth, so as to exercise no go-  
“ vernment, no providence over it ;” what  
influence could this have upon the truths  
themselves ? Would they be ever the less *cer-*  
*tain*, evident, or desirable ? What if the *greatest*  
part of the world were literally blind, would  
it be ever the less true that there is a sun in the  
heavens ? Or could their unbelief, their denial  
of it, any way abate its heat, or eclipse its  
light ? In like manner, should there be no  
fear, no worship, no acknowledgment of God  
in the land, could this in the least affect the  
reasonableness, the necessity, and the everlast-  
ing importance, of the things themselves ? Or  
should it be the general sentiment that blas-  
phemy, profaneness, cruelty and injustice, were  
only arbitrary names given to things, which  
were in themselves indifferent, would the call-  
ing them by these names change their nature,  
or the universal practice of them, abate their  
real infamy ? This is quite a *foreign* circum-  
stance ; it hath nothing in the world to do with  
the *truth* of the things ; nor can it have any  
possible influence on the essential difference be-  
tween good and evil : and therefore there never  
can be any reason in the impious principles  
and

SERM. and practice of the world, however fashionable  
 XII. or prevailing, for our conforming to it therein.

2. Numbers and multitudes embarked in the cause of impiety and wickedness, let their quality, reputation, or rank be what they will, can yield no plea or excuse to others for joining with them.

Surely they must be as void of understanding as of religion, who can be brought to think, that a multitude of transgressors can be any apology for sin; or can look upon the fashion of the world as nulling the authority, or as a repeal, of the divine laws. What is it to us what the generality think or do, with respect to the direction of our sentiments and practice? Vice is infamy, misery, and madness, tho' all the learned, the wealthy, the great, and the honourable of the world espouse and patronize it. On the other hand, piety and virtue are the wisdom, the honour, the interest, *the all* of an intelligent reasonable creature, though there are but few, and though those few should be ever so mean, who avow and practice it. The grand enquiry, the thing, the only thing, my soul, which thou hast to consult is *this*, what are the instructions, the decisions, and orders of thy infallible Teacher, thy Saviour, and thy Judge? No numbers, of whatever station



tion or reputation, have the least pretension to S ERM.  
an authority against God and conscience. XII.

Some may think, that when vitious sentiments and practices greatly prevail, and by general custom and long prescription, are as it were passed into a law, that this is so strong a temptation to a conformity, as to yield an apology for a compliance. I grant it is a temptation or trial, and of some strength too: but it is *no more than* a trial; and no greater a one than all sincere christians have had to grapple with, and have triumphed over. For none ever yet obtained eternal life but by conquering this temptation of fashionable vice, as well as others: and surely, it is a groundless and most uncharitable suggestion, that all who have professed christianity have not been christians, but only hypocrites in disguise. If its being a temptation would bear us out in swimming with the stream, and in falling in with the course of the world, then every temptation to evil, would carry an *excuse* in itself for our compliance with it: whereby every one might excuse themselves from their duty, and might sin without being in a fault. But, Christ hath made no allowance for the opinions and customs of the world however general: nor have we the least ground to think, that it will avail us at last, to shelter ourselves under the protection

SERM. tection of this plea, from the arrest of the di-  
 XII. vine justice; or that when all mankind are  
 ~~~~~ called to an account, and adjudged to widely  
 different states by their conformity to the will
 of God, that there will be any abatements
 made for the power of custom, or the common
 practices of the world, if we have been conformists to them.

Besides, have we not the same arguments to urge against this as against other temptations? Would not the serious consideration of that awful and rightful authority which hath absolutely forbid our compliance; the unknown power of his anger, and the blissful consequences of his love, which shall be awarded to us as we are obedient or disobedient—would not these arguments I say, infinitely outweigh every other in the scale of a rational judgment, and amount to a stronger dissuasive *from* a conformity to the world, than all that custom, fashion, and numbers, could suggest for it? In short, numbers and multitudes, confederated in impiety and wickedness, can furnish us with no apology for joining with them, unless our fear and regard of men, and of the vilest and most contemptible of men too, can justify our contempt and disregard of God, or unless it will be admitted as a plea hereafter in arrest of judgment against ourselves as workers of iniquity,

quity, " that it was the prevailing custom and SERM.
" fashion of the places where we lived to be XII.
" vicious." But surely none can ever bring
themselves to believe this, who believe it is a
righteous and holy God who judgeth.

There is another thing which further evidences the reasonableness of the prohibition in the text, and of our regarding it, viz.

Fourthly, Since things are constituted as they are by the gospel, it is the height of folly and madness to conform to the sinful customs and practices of the world, or to be influenced to an imitation thereof by their *prevalency*.

We know that vice will expose us to a divine condemnation ; that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ; and this the unchangeable truth of God stands engaged to execute on those against whom it is awarded. Is it not the madness of folly then, to subject ourselves to such a condemnation by provoking the divine wrath ? and to live liable to the Almighty's displeasure, which involves an inexpressible woe, *because others* are mad enough to run the risque ? Whatever compliances with the customs and ways of others in matters perfectly *innocent* and *indifferent*, good-nature, good-manners, or civility, may be thought to require, yet it is monstrous to pretend any engagement

SERM. gagement from these in cases of plain *sin* and

XII. *duty*. What! doth civility towards *men*, oblige me to offer indignity and affront to the most *High God*? Is my gaining or forfeiting eternal happiness, to be determined by my complaisance to others? Doth good manners oblige me to pledge a mad fool in a cup of poison, if he thinks fit to drink it, or to leap down a precipice after him? Surely these appeals answer themselves. Whatever regard then is due to our fellow-creatures, whatever condescensions are required towards them, neither reason, law, nor conscience, can admit, much less require, such a one as this, "that we should shew them so much respect, as be content to perish, or be undone *with them*." No argument for our actions, can be more stupidly weak and silly, than this. This is to proclaim, that persons have lost all sense of their own dignity, of the difference between good and evil; that their reason is departed from them; their consciences are not in their own keeping, or that they have none for their own use; and that they have sunk themselves to the level of the animal, who follows the foremost of its kind, without any sense of danger or safety. It were *something*, if the world, whom we compliment with our immortal souls, and our glorious reversion in another

state,

state, could answer for us at a divine tribunal: SERM. but the contrary to this is expressly assured, since XII. every one shall give an account *of himself* to God, Rom. xiv. 12. Though all who are condemned at last, will feel a most pungent overwhelming shame and confusion, from a consciousness of a distracted conduct; yet sure none will feel more thereof, than those who consent to be miserable for *fashion-sake*. And of that number are all those, who pay such regard to the principles, modes, or practices of others, as through fear of reproach, or hope of their favour, are prevailed upon to conform to them in what is essentially vicious, or directly tends to the betraying and seducing them into that which is so.

Thus I have finished the subject, to which a real benevolence towards you that have heard it, led me. I have had a more especial view to those who are coming up into the world; and whose after lives are generally modelled by their first principles, sentiments, and associates. It is one of the follies that takes the earliest possession of the mind, *to be in the fashion*, or *to follow a general mode* in the lump, without ever reflecting whether it is suitable to station and condition, or consistent with character. And from this very principle, “of making “the general practice a standard,” are we in-

VOL. II. X sensibly

SERM. sensibly led to judge of moral good and
XII. evil, by the stamp that the world sets upon
things and actions, and the estimate they have
of them. I do not know a more extensive delusion than this, nor one more *fatal*. Oh! how many have split, how many are daily splitting upon this rock! what I have offered has been with a view to detect and expose it; and to arm you and myself against it, pursuant to the peremptory prohibition in the text, “not to be conformed to this world.”

Some conclusions may be drawn from what hath been said; which I think we may justly, and very advantageously adhere to; and which we must steer by if we would be happy here or hereafter. I will just mention them and dismiss you.

The precepts of the gospel, and not the practices of those who profess it, are our rule. No numbers, whatever their reputation or their quality be, are a rule to us for the modelling of our conduct. Here nothing but the laws of God have any authority; nor can we be safe or justified, by implicitly following *any* other. By this the examples and practices of the best as well as of the worst, are to be tried; and if inconsistent therewith, or repugnant thereto, the former are equally to be shunned with the latter. Where they leave God, we
must

must leave them, unless we will be contented SERM.
to be condemned with them. XII.

What is statedly found to be introductive to evil is prohibited, and to be avoided equally with the evil itself.

That can be neither little nor lawful, whatever the world vote it to be, that hath a direct tendency to such an issue, as to render us guilty in the eye of God.

Retirement from the world, for religious purposes, is absolutely necessary for our safety at present, or our felicity hereafter. It is by our being always in the world that our judgments are corrupted, our taste and relishes are vitiated, and we are captivated by popular and prevailing customs. How shall we attain to juster sentiments, but by considering and weighing vulgar notions and prejudices; which can only be done when we are *alone*? How shall we refine our relishes, or become sensible wherein we have criminally complied with prevailing modes, or fortify ourselves against the tyranny of fashion, but by retreating to our retirements, and looking into ourselves? The disorders we have contracted, the manners we have copied, and the undue lengths we have gone, by our engagements and from our regards to the world, are not likely to be amended till we are sensible of them by re-

SERM. flection: and whether is the closet, or the
XII. world, a place for thought and conversing with
ourselves?

We have no security for the moral or christian character, next to the divine aids and influences, that is equal to that of inward and experimental religion. Our dissenting from the general usages and manners of the world, is wont to be attended with ridicule and reproach from it, to draw the derision and scorn of the multitude upon us. But were we but acquainted with the power and the pleasures of religion, we should be able to bear much more than that for it. We should not need numbers to countenance us in the profession of it, nor to secure our adherence to it. We should be able to bear the frightful charge of singularity; and face the imputation of preciseness. Had it but once thoroughly tinctured and impressed the mind, it would inspire with the fortitude and resolution that it needs for its own maintenance; we should act more independently on the world; and we should stand more in awe of our own consciences, than of all our fellow-creatures; and be able to rest and triumph in the approbation of God, amidst all the malignant censures, and senseless reflections of those about us.

Finally:

Finally: whatever our attainments in religion be, we are ever to be upon our watch. SERM. XII.

Whilst we are furrounded and solicited as we are at present, with so much that is insinuating in these treacherous and sinful regions, and shockingly encouraged as it is, our safety must lie in our apprehension of danger, and in being ever on our guard against it. It is well known, that the many laws and ordinances which God gave the Israelites, were to preserve them from the abominable wickedness of the nations round about them, into which they were in continual danger of falling, through a friendship and intimacy with them. But we find the prophet lamenting ten of the tribes out of the twelve, under the title of Ephraim, that “they had mixed themselves with the “people:” they had, by associating with and conforming themselves to the other nations, confounded themselves with them, Hosea vii. 8. the one was not to be discerned from the other. To such a state of things we seem apparently hastening from our prevailing security, and insensibility of danger from a general infection; and from a stupidity greater than that of the silly bird, are multitudes daily taken in the snare which is spread in their very sight, Prov. i. 17.

SERM. To close. Since none of the modish sentiments
XII. or manners of the world can touch the excellency, or shade the lustre of religion, or confer any reputation upon vice, let none of them ever move us from our steadfastness; nor from those purposes which many here, I hope, have formed upon a very deliberate view of things. Abhorred be the maxims of the world, that shall disguise the most baneful and reproachful things with specious names, and *villify* those which are the honour, the perfection, and felicity of the human nature. If to be religious is to be singular or unpolite, let us be unfashionably good, and do what we can to render others so. It is enough, if we hereby can enjoy an inward peace; a self-approving, self-rewarding mind; if under the censures of others we can applaud ourselves; and can triumph in the applause of that Being, whose esteem is the highest honour, and the most comprehensive felicity.





S E R M O N XIII.



The Vanity of Security under PRO-
SPERITY.



PSALM xxx. 6, 7.

And in my Prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord! by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled.

WHILST the errors and failings of SERM.
the *best* are recorded, to teach us that XIII.
there is no such thing as *absolute* perfection }
in this life, they are designed to instruct us al-
so in the necessity of watchfulness and reflec-
tion, let our attainments in piety be what they
will, in order to prevent our sliding insensibly
into those frames and practices which are a
X 4 blemish

SERM. blemish to our religion, a reproach to our reason, and, if persisted in to the last, will be attended with fatal consequences. The representation which the Psalmist is giving of himself in the text, is doubtless intended for and may be improved to this end: since the *best* of us are too apt to discover the same disposition under the same circumstances; and to expose ourselves to the same reproofs which he met with from providence.

There are two things in these words deserving regard, viz.

A charge exhibited by the Psalmist *against himself*. And

An acknowledgment of the source and shamefulness of his error.

First, Here is a charge exhibited by the Psalmist against himself. "In my prosperity I said "I shall never be moved." Here is a plain confession of a great mistake of judgment, and faultiness of temper.

By *his prosperity* I think is meant, "a very "easy, peaceful, happy state in general, including body, mind, and external circumstances." The term seems to import, "a "variety and affluence of sensitive good "things, with leave and liberty to enjoy "them." Now as to this his state, he owns he had not the least apprehension of an alteration;

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ration ; but was confidently promising himself SERM.
a long and uninterrupted continuance of it. XIII.
This he means by his *not being moved* : and
this conclusion he tells us, his *very prosperity*
led him to draw. Being quiet, easy and happy,
he never thought of being otherwise : being
surrounded with blessings on every side, he
had no apprehension of being stripped, or of
knowing adversity : but on the contrary, flat-
tered himself he was quite secure and safe, and
that to-morrow would be as this day.

What the Psalmist therefore here charges
himself with, is, a vain security and ground-
less confidence, accompanied with a stupid
and ungrateful forgetfulness of his obligations
to, and dependence on the divine goodness,
as the effect of his present happy circumstance.
This is a very common consequence of pro-
sperity, and one of the vices into which it is
apt to betray us. From hence it was that
Moses gives the Israelite that caution, that
when they were put into the possession of the
land of Canaan, a land of great plenty and
enjoyment, that they would exercise a peculiar
care that they *did not forget God* : strongly in-
timating, *that* was a situation wherein they
would be in great danger of it. Deut. vi. 11,
12. Upon the temptation that there is in an
affluent circumstance, *practically* to disown our
need

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affluent circumstance, *practically* to disown our
need

SERM. need of God, or our having any concern with
 XIII. him, Agur forms his request, and expresses
 his wise choice of a lot, if God thought fit, wherein he should not be in danger of it. Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

When the text tells us that the *Psalmist* said, "that he should never be moved," it is not necessary that we should understand by it, that he in so many words declared it: but only, that from the confluence of surrounding blessings he was so engrossed by them, that the state of his mind and the tenor of his behaviour proclaimed a shameful forgetfulness of their uncertainty, and his dependence on the providence of God for their continuance. He looked upon himself as most securely safe without any thing further; as if he had all in his own hands; and laid the stress of his future high expectations absolutely upon promising appearances. Now for this he evidently *condemns* himself; and both as to his sentiment and behaviour upon this occasion, he seems to make Asaph's humble and penitent acknowledgment on *another* occasion, "So foolish was I and ignorant, and even as a beast before thee." Psal. lxxiii. 22. And in this condemnation of his security and confidence he acted a very just part; for it is both *unreasonable*; and *criminal*.

I. To grow secure and confident of the SERM.
continuance of our prosperity ; not to *expect* a XIII.
change, much more to *presume* we shall see
none, is very unreasonable.

There is nothing that the experience of all mankind constrains them more universally to acknowledge, than the instability of every worldly circumstance. Who in theory doth not allow, that joy may very suddenly be exchanged for sorrow, plenty for want, hope for fear, and peace for trouble? how can we promise ourselves the continuance of a circumstance, which depends upon a variety of immediate causes, and upon a variety too that is not in our hands, nor in our power to influence? Such as the variable wills, the changing circumstances, the uncertain passions, and unsteady conduct of *others*. How can we answer for *our own* affections, passions, taste and relish, or for the disposition of *our own minds*, which so soon and suddenly vary? and by these the *estimate*, and *pleasure* of things *without us* are governed. It is according to what we *ourselves are*, that the ingredients of our circumstances are found entertaining or insipid, delightful or disgustful: Who I say, can answer for our keeping to the same pitch in our tempers, relishes, and disposition to be pleased with and to enjoy external blessings,
till

SERM. till we can ensure the continuance of that
 XIII. foundation blessing, *health*? A blessing, that
 { gives the relish to every other; that like the
 sun in the firmament diffuses life and beauty
 to every object; that draws forth their sweets,
 and even *makes* the day of life: Or till they
 can secure the mind from that dulness and
 heaviness, and a thousand other malignant in-
 fluences from the distempered machine, by
 which it is continually liable to be af-
 fected, and even disabled as to its capacity
 for pleasure and the enjoyment of any external
 good things, by virtue of its union with the
 body. The truth is, we might as rationally
 expect to have *always* the *same* serenity of air,
 the *same* cloudless sky, that may at any par-
 ticular time be found, as to imagine that
 any considerable degree of prosperity will con-
 tinue long the same, from the continuance of
 the causes from whence it flows. Both these
 expectations are equally wild and frantic;
 and from one and the same reason, viz. from
 the *known variableness* of the causes, on which
 such events depend.

It may be, there is nothing that more infa-
 tuates the mind with a presumptive confidence
 and security, and even an independency on
 providence, than great wealth. The wise man
 hath taken particular notice of it, and at the
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same time hath strongly exposed it. Prov. SERM.
 xviii. 11. "The rich man's wealth, saith he, XIII.
 is his strong city, and as an high wall in his
 account." The plain meaning of which is,
 "That such a one is apt to look upon him-
 "self so intrenched in his abundance, that he
 "bids defiance to all evil from any quarter,
 "providence itself not excepted: he tells
 "himself, that he hath all within himself;
 "and from thence is secured, as by an high
 "wall or bulwark, against all invasions of
 "his prosperity." But this, saith the wise
 man, is only "in his own conceit." This
 security of his, is altogether imaginary: it is
 a most vain and absurd fancy; and betrays a
 great destitution of reason, or a very criminal
 laying it aside—This brings me to observe,

2. This security is not only in the highest
 degree a reproach and reflection upon ourselves
 from the *folly* of it, but it is very *criminal* in
 its own nature; it implies a great deal of *guilt*,
 and is productive of much moral evil. And
 the Psalmist seems to me not only implicitly
 to express a confusion and shame at the *unrea-*
sonableness of his conduct, but also to charge
 himself with a great degree of *offence*, as be-
 ing thereby highly *guilty* before God.

From the *past* experience we have had of
 the displays of the divine wisdom, power,
 care,

SERM. till we can ensure the continuance of that
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 good things, by virtue of its union with the
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 ing thereby highly *guilty* before God.

From the *past* experience we have had of
 the displays of the divine wisdom, power,
 care,

SERM. care, and bounty, in respect of our own particular
 XIII. concerns, we may humbly hope and affection-
 ately confide in the same ruling perfections, with respect to our *future* circumstances. Not indeed to the *assuring* or *ascertaining* to ourselves the continuance of the same *individual* enjoyments; or the *absolute* uninterrupted of our present tranquillity: but we are warranted from what we *have* known of the divine name and providence, to say in the general with David elsewhere, "Surely goodness and mercy *shall* follow me all my days." Psalm xxiii. 6. This is faith in God, and not security. To influence us to this, is one end of that care, tenderness, protection, and beneficence, which the great Shepherd so variously displays, whilst we are in the wilderness of this world. We may also gratefully rejoice in, and take all the real satisfaction of our enjoyments, whilst the candle of the Lord shines strongly upon our tabernacle. But when our confidence and dependence as to futurity, is placed on an imagined *self-sufficiency*, from a plenty and an abundance already in our own hands; when we are wrapt up in ourselves and in our circumstances with respect both of safety and satisfaction; or when we act as if we thought, that we are so environed and entrenched by the hedge that is made about us, as to be sheltered

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sheltered from every storm, to be provided SERM.
 against every want, and to have the redressing XIII.
 and removing of every grievance *within our-*
selves—this, I think, is security; and what
 the Psalmist is charging himself with in the
 text.

The thing *itself* must appear so sottish and stupid, when truly represented, that we can hardly suppose, that any can in words avow it; but it is undeniably the language of the conduct in many instances. Wherever it is found, it is an evidence of a very bad mind. For it is an *implicit* denial of, or renouncing all dependence upon the God above. It is a *virtual* defiance of the overruling power and providence of God. He is *left* out, nay even *shut* out from all agency and influence over our affairs and enjoyments: *they* are taken thereby *out of his* hands, and considered as *absolutely in our own*; and the hope and trust that is due to his *perfections, and providence*, are placed upon his *gifts and blessings*. This is evil in itself; and it also *tends to further* evil; it exposes to many temptations, and *to our falling* by them.

This security and confidence stifles devotion; it is a disowning our dependence on God; and consequently a destroying our gratitude to him. It introduces a general contempt of
 him,

SERM. him, and consequently a general disregard of
 XIII. him. It naturally produces wantonness and
 levity; and renders us the property of our
 wild imaginations, and our unrestrained pas-
 sions. There is nothing that more effectually
 makes us forget ourselves and our condition.
 It is indeed founded therein; from whence all
 duties and obligations both to God and man
 are set aside, any further than sensual indul-
 gencies and gratifications will permit. When
 men *meet* with no changes, much more when
 they are *apprehensive* of none, in respect of
 their prosperity, they are naturally fearless and
 regardless both of the authority and displea-
 sure of God. Psalm lv. 19. Whilst in the
 fullest *expectation* and prospect of *changes*, it
 is both *rational* and *religious* to say, "I will
 fear no evil," in a dependence on the presence,
 the power, and the providence of God; on
 the other hand, it is *absurd* and *wicked*, even
 in the most *calm* and *settled* state to say, to
 think, or to act as if we thought, "That we
 " should see no sorrow, or that no evil should
 " come to us," through an imagined independ-
 ency on providence, or a confidence in any
 scene of circumstance. But,

Secondly, We have in these words, the Psalm-
 ist's acknowledgment of the source and shame-
 fulness

fulness of his error. "Lord! by thy favour thou
 "hast made my mountain to stand strong." SERM.
XIII.

That it may appear that this was the Psalmist's view in this verse, I would offer the following paraphrase of both. "I was in a very
 "happy and prosperous circumstance, both as
 "to my person and affairs: every thing smiled
 "around me: peace and plenty flowed like a
 "stream; and at the same time they seemed as
 "settled in respect of their duration as a mountain. From hence I had no apprehension of
 "interruption or change: I flattered myself that
 "nothing could affect the scene. But *flattery*
 "it was; and this my confidence was vain
 "and sinful. For I never considered, O my
 "God, what was most obvious and certain, that
 "as I was *put into* the possession of my happy
 "circumstance by thee, so I *held* it absolutely
 "and solely by the tenure of thy favour. But
 "soon was I convinced of the folly of my security, and of the reality of my dependence
 "on thy providence. For, being angry with
 "me, thou didst but withdraw thy favour and
 "protection, and I was soon and suddenly involved in trouble." Thus I think the words stand connected. If so, it is plain he grounds his security and presumption upon his not attending to his dependence on God; to the truth of which he now subscribes upon the most sensible conviction; acknowledging the disre-

SERM. gard thereof, was his crime, reproach, and
XIII. shame.

The dependence of man upon God is a subject of universal concernment. It is one of those truths, the firm persuasion of which hath a general influence upon our religion and happiness. It is so evident upon the least serious attention, that it may be thought needless to insist upon it. I hope it is already the sentiment of this assembly. But do we act and live up to it? Do our minds and lives carry the signatures and evidences of our believing it? I am afraid they do not. It may not be needless then amidst our profession of this truth, to consider its foundation a little, in order to its becoming a *governing principle*. I would therefore

I. Offer something for the establishing this truth, of man's dependence on God; and then

II. Shew you how it should be acknowledged; or how our belief thereof should be evidenced.

First, I would suggest some things for the establishing our minds in this truth, *of man's dependence on God*.

And I believe it true in respect of the *whole* of our happiness; as to all the ingredients of it, and the means conducing to it. We are equally dependents upon the divine influence for the maintenance and comfort
of

of the *spiritual* life, and upon the divine providence for the continuance and enjoyment of the *natural* life. But as the text respects only the prosperity of the *latter*, I shall confine myself thereto. Now be pleased to consider,

1. The very notion of *a creature* carries dependence in it: and the being the *creatures* of God, as we undeniably are, implies an *essential* dependence *upon him*.

Since we received our beings from him, we of course derived our *natures*, or the degrees of power, capacity, and existence from him. Their *measure* was just what he was pleased to bestow. If we are independent on himself it must be from his original grant of such a sufficiency of power, as capacitates us to subsist, to command our own affairs, to supply our own wants, to accomplish our own desires, and to enjoy the good in our own hands, without any *need* of *his* agency, assistance, or blessing. I will not pretend to say, with what degrees thereof God *could* have put a creature out of his hand, because he hath not told me. But, to make a creature *absolutely independent on himself*, looks to me like a thing that God cannot be supposed to do: for this reason, amongst others; that it would be raising a creature to a seeming sharing with him, in what he hath declared to be his *incommunicable* name, Jehovah,

SERM. *the Being, the Existing* ; importing that *he*
 XIII. exists in every view, *in a manner* that *no other*
 being can ever be said to do : and every one
 must allow that the most *distinguishing* and
 perfect manner of existence, must be that of
independency. For which reason it is a glory
 he will not give to another ; it must be appro-
 priated to God ; his *sole* prerogative. Could this
self-sufficiency therefore have been imparted to
us, it would have been the removing us out of
 a creature-state. Yea supposing man is de-
 signed for a state of perfection hereafter, and
 religion is necessary to qualify for heaven, such
 an independency would have been a great
 unhappiness to us, as it would naturally lead
 us to live as without God in the world, and
 would have been thought a *licence* for doing so.
 If *with* the abundant evidence we now have
 of our dependence on God, we can *hardly* be
 engaged to remember and acknowledge him,
 what would it be if our peace, plenty, and
 prosperity could be secured and encreased,
 when and as *we pleased*?

But supposing that the thing itself was *not*
 inconsistent with the prerogative of the divine
 nature, if we were actually independent on
 God, doubtless there would have been some-
 thing in our circumstances that would have given
 us some intimation of it ; or from whence our
 reason

Reason might have collected it. But did it ever give in, such an information to man? Nay, would even *instinct* have told mankind the *contrary*; as it doth at times in the most indisputable manner? To instance only in *one* thing. Were we independent on God, should we ever find ourselves prompted as by natural instinct to pray to him, which we often find? Doth not the very nature of prayer imply *dependence*? Is it not its very foundation, its very language? Nay, it is the highest absurdity upon any other supposition. For who would ever ask of another, what they could bestow upon themselves? When therefore our own minds, as of their own accord, prompt and urge us to cry and address *to Heaven* for relief and help in a vast variety of cases, as under wants which *we* cannot supply, dangers from which *we* cannot deliver ourselves, and under burdens and difficulties which *we* cannot lighten, is not this an undeniable confession, and as strong a proof as we can have, that God hath made us entirely dependent on himself? Do we not *feel* it? Surely, we should never *find* any such instinctive call to prayer, if God had put all that we need for our support and happiness *into our own hands*. In that case, there could be no more a natural *inclination* to seek to him, than there could be a *reason* for it.

SERM.
XIII.

SERM. As all the power, perfection, and happiness
 XIII. which we possess is *derived* from God, so his
 own nature and honour, with our relation to
 him as *his creatures*, render it the greatest ab-
 surdity to imagine, that such effects should not
 depend on their cause; or that what exists, *as*
we do, *meerly* by the will of another, should not
 exist just so long, and in that manner, as that
 other pleases.

2. Revelation establishes man's necessa-
 ry and constant dependence on God in the
 plainest and strongest terms.

This truth cannot be more fully expressed in
 general, nor can it be more strongly asserted, than
 it is by the Apostle, Acts xvii. 28. "In him we
 " live, and move, and have our being." These
 words include every power of body and mind,
 with *all* their exercises and operations; *every*
 means, with *all* their effects and successes;
every condition of being, with all its circum-
 stances, as to ingredients, measure, and dura-
 tion: these are *absolutely* and invariably depen-
 dent on the divine will and pleasure as the
 streams are upon the spring, in contradistinc-
 tion to all the powers and influences of second
 causes.

But revelation doth not only assert this in the
 general, but it descends to very minute parti-
 culars, which you who converse with it must
 know

know and allow. If you *believe* the scripture, and be determined by them, you must grant, SERM.
XIII.

That life itself, the foundation of all happiness, is in the hand of God. “In his hand is the soul, or life, of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind,” Job xii. 10. The absolute *sovereignty* thereof is with *himself*. It is in his power and at his pleasure, to weaken our strength in the way, or in the midst of our course, and shorten our days: he can cut off the number of our months in the midst of our strength, or in the flower of our age: he can also restore our strength when failing, and renew the vigour of the youthful state, Psal. cii. 13. Job xxxiii. 25.

He hath also a sovereignty, and exercises it too, over every *state and circumstance* of life: whether it shall be prosperous or adverse, plentiful or strait, *depends* on his pleasure. Whether we know, consider, and acknowledge it or not, our corn, our wool, and our flax, are *his*; he *gives* them to us from time to time: it is not in our power to bestow them upon and secure them to *ourselves*; for when in the course of nature, and from the appearing success of our best endeavours, we think ourselves *most sure*, it absolutely depends upon the divine will whether our most sanguine expectations shall not be cut off, Hosea ii. 8, 9. Thus *our times* are

SERM. in his hands ; that is, the *condition* of life is in
 XIII. his determination : it is a state of enjoyment or
 suffering as *he* is pleased to order it, be the cir-
 cumstances *in themselves* what they will, Psal.
 xxxi. 15. He *exchanges* the condition from one
 extreme to another ; he maketh poor and
 maketh rich : he succeeds or he disappoints :
 he blesses or he blasts : for he governs all
 those causes which have an influence upon our
 circumstances, either to establish our moun-
 tain, or to throw it down. None of us can be
 raised so high, or settled so firm, but God can
 soon and suddenly bring us down from our
 dignities and confidences : or according to the
 Prophet's very strong and elegant expression,
 he can make our sun to go down *at noon*, Amos
 viii. 9. When the shines of circumstance
 are strongest, and in their full perfection, when
 there is no room left for a wish, and we have
 a prospect of a very considerable remainder of
 enjoyment ; he can stretch forth the shadows of
 the evening upon us, and shut in our day at
 once. These events are not according to the
 accidental concurrences of visible causes, but
 according to *his* permission or ordination, *who*
hath the ordaining of our lot.

To instance in one thing more under this head.
 Revelation in a variety of passages assures us,
 God hath an immediate access to and power
 over

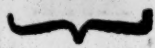
over the *human mind*: and can disquiet or de- SERM.
light us by any, by all, its faculties: and with XIII.
this, reason concurs. *In*, or amidst the mul-
titude of our *painful* thoughts within us, he can
refresh our souls with his consolations: and
also by his *terrors* he can *distract* us and render
us *miserable* in the midst of the greatest *abun-*
dance. From this very power of God itself
over the human mind, or was he able only to
reach and affect *that*, it might most truly be
said, that upon his favour *our prosperity* ab-
solutely depended: since our *happiness* and
enjoyment is *principally* affected and is much
more truly measured, by the *state* and *disposi-*
tion of the mind, than by any, by *all*, *externals*
put together.

This brings me to another way whereby
this truth is confirmed.

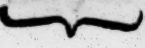
3. Experience, universal experience, at-
tests the same truth that reason and scripture
do.

In how many cases is all our skill, power,
and influence, baffled as to the securing or
keeping off a *single* event, in which our feli-
city is greatly concerned? What can the *unit-*
ed power, and wealth of a *nation* contribute
towards the procuring a cheering sun, a fa-
vourable wind, or a refreshing rain, in its sea-
son? What antidote, what fence can human
art

SERM. art suggest against infectious air? What can
 XIII. the united efforts of a kingdom do towards the
 gathering or opening of the clouds, or staying
 the bottles of heaven, as it is expressed in Job;
 or what can the power or policy of a nation
 do against an army of insects, when they come
 with a commission from heaven? What can
 we contribute towards the saving of a threat-
 ned life, in which our happiness and prosperity
 may be bound up? What have we in our
 power towards the preventing an arrest, or to-
 wards the respiting the execution of the sen-
 tence of death on the dearest relative or friend,
 upon whose life the standing of our mountain,
 in just apprehension, and according to all hu-
 man views, depends? Psalm xlix. 7, 9. How
 often, as to all *outward* appearance, are per-
 sons blest with all that heart can wish? want-
 ing nothing to which their desires can extend
 for the ministring of pleasure: in the eye of
 the world intrenched on every side; no *visible*
 avenue left open for the approach of an enemy;
 nay seeming to *themselves* in circumstances to
 bid defiance to all human force, art, malice,
 and revenge? and yet a *secret* mine hath been
 sprung, that hath made all about them shake;
 a secret blast hath shrivelled up all their com-
 fort: and though the visible ingredients of
 happiness have continued the same, yet they
 have

have yielded nothing to the possessor? What SERM.
is the reason of all this? "why the power to XIII.
"enjoy this is from the hand of God." It is 
a distinct, it is a peculiar, gift. Eccles. ii.
24. vi. 2. Now, if we are *not* dependent
creatures, whence comes it to pass that we
find ourselves so impotent in the possession of
all that is called power? so indigent in the
midst of plenty? so miserable with many in-
gredients of happiness in our hands? If we
are self-sufficient, why do not we exert it for
the accomplishment of our own wishes? why
do we not try our abilities for our own bene-
fit? why do we not overrule events that we
foresee and dread? Why do we want any
thing that is needed, or bear any thing that is
painful; or lose any thing desirable? But
would not such language look like *insult* when
addressed to the most vain and self-sufficient
creature? Surely that is a *strange* self-suffici-
ency, in the fulness of which we are very
often in straits! Were we *capable* of reflection,
and would we but exercise it as to our *experien-*
ced ignorance, impotency, and necessity in a
thousand instances, we could never be so in-
toxicated with prosperity, as to imagine our-
selves independent on God, in any single case
or circumstance.

These

SERM. These things, if laid together, do even demonstrate, that how little dependence soever
 XIII.  some effects of *human* contrivance may have upon *their* originals; how well soever *they* may subsist and perform their intended operations, *independently* on their artificer, when once produced; yet *man*, when set out in the *best* manner, when most *liberally* furnished and supplied, is as absolute a dependent on the providence of God, as the helpless infant is on the parent: calling equally for the care, the succour, supply and shelter of his heavenly father to *rear* him to any degree of happiness, and for the *continuance* of that care, of that favourable and seasonable indulgence to *preserve* him in it.

To sum up what hath been said. If we can form a true judgment by what we *see* in things about us, or by what we *find* in ourselves: if our most certain rules of judging do not fail us, we are compelled to confess, that the continuance of our being, of our capacities, and of all the causes influential on our happiness, with the degree of each, depends on *his* good pleasure, from whom they are originally derived. Nay, if our own most enlightened and impartial minds do not mislead us, we must see it is *impossible* that any creature can be placed in a state of independence

dency on its creator, let its circumstances for power, perfection, and happiness be what they will. They are originally *gifts*; our retaining them depends entirely on the continued agency and favour of their great author. What exists merely *by the will* of another, must exist only *during the pleasure* of that other: the kind and degree of circumstance, which flows from the free and unmerited appointment of God, must be always subject to his limitation and controul. There is no fortress, no intrenchment, impregnable by Omnipotence; there is no settlement of circumstance, though it appear as fixed and stable as the great mountains, but that same Omnipotence can shake and overturn. From hence it appears, at least to myself, that it is *impossible*, but that man should be an *absolute* dependent on God.

I should now proceed to the second general head. viz. To shew how this truth should be *acknowledged* and *owned*. But I must defer that. For the present I shall add very little more.

My aim hath been to establish our minds in the persuasion of our necessary and absolute dependence on God. If what hath been said, hath been evidence and proof thereof, I hope we shall from hence live more under the habitual

SERM.
XIII.

SERM. bitual impressi^on of the thought and truth.

XIII. It would be of unknown service to us many ways. Let not the most specious and promising scene of things conceal the divine agency from our minds, nor render us indifferent to the divine favour : but let us look through all, confessing and confiding only in the great, the governing, cause ; being firmly persuaded that every thing about us is absolutely governed in their operations by a divine commission or permission, to do us good or hurt : or, that all events shall be found, as the wise and righteous will of the great disposer determines ; and *not* as present appearances *promise*, nor according to the plan of our wishes and imaginations. Let us make this use then of the uncertainty and instability of every circumstance, “ to fix our eye, our heart, and our “ dependence *above*.” Then shall we never be ashamed of our security and confidence ; nor be deceived in our rational expectations. For, whatever an unthinking world may dream, it will be sooner or latter every ones conviction, that God is all in all.



SERMON



S E R M O N XIV.



On the same S U B J E C T.



P S A L M xxx. 6, 7.

And in my Prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord! by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled.

I N these words there are two things worthy of S E R M. XIV. our regard, which I have proposed to consider. Here is a charge exhibited by the Psalmist against himself; and an acknowledgment of the source and shamefulness of his error.

I have

SERM. I have gone through the first thing, viz.
 XIV. the charge which the Psalmist exhibits against
 himself. “ In my prosperity I said, I should
 never be moved.”

Here is an evident accusation both as to a mistake of judgment, and faultiness of temper. Having a variety, and an affluence of sensitive good, and liberty of enjoying it, which the term *prosperity* includes, he confidently promised himself a long and uninterrupted enjoyment of it. A very common effect of prosperity, and one of the vices incident to that state. What he here charges himself with therefore is, a vain security and groundless confidence, growing upon him from a very happy circumstance. It is not necessary that by the expression in the text, we should understand that he in so many words declared it; but, the workings of his mind, and the course of his actions carried that language in them: for all must allow that actions have a language, if not generally to be esteemed the loudest and truest. Now for this his security and vain presumption he evidently condemns himself. This I have endeavoured to prove was very just, as it was both unreasonable and criminal; and no *less* so *in us*, than *in him*. And there needs nothing more to prove such a presumptive security *foolish* and
wicked,

wicked, than to consider that it is setting up SERM.
for an independency on Providence, and is a XIV.
virtual disclaiming and defiance of it. This
led to the second thing.

II. The Psalmist's acknowledgment of the source and shamefulneſs of his error, which is the import of the 7th verſe, "Lord! by thy favour thou haſt made my mountain to ſtand ſtrong." The connection of the two verſes, I gave in this ſhort paraphraſe, "I *was* in a
" very happy circumſtance; every thing
" ſmiled around me: from hence I flattered
" myſelf that nothing could affect me: but
" flattery it was, and this my confidence was
" vain and ſinful. For I never conſidered all
" the while what was moſt certain and obvi-
" ous, that the continuance and eſtabliſhment
" of my happineſs depended ſolely upon thy
" favour O Lord! which I ſoon and ſuddenly
" found." If this paraphraſe is juſt, it is plain, that the Psalmiſt's ſecurity aroſe from his not attending to his dependence on God. The truth of which he now ſubſcribes and eſtabliſhes.

Under this head I propoſed Firſt, To offer ſome things for the confirming this important uſeful truth. And I endeavour'd to do it from reaſon, ſcripture, and every ones experience. The ſum of what was ſaid is this, " That
VOL. II. Z " if

SERM. " if we can attain to any *certainty* from what

XIV. " we see in things *about us*, or by what we

" find in *ourselves*, we may be certain of this,

" That the continuance of our beings, our

" powers, and of all the causes influential on

" our happiness, with the degree of each,

" depends on his good pleasure from whom

" they are originally derived : " nay, that as

" far as we can judge from the moral per-

" fections and government of God, it is not

" consistent therewith, that *any* creature can

" be placed in a state of independency on

" its creator, let its circumstances for powers,

" perfection, and happiness, be what they

" will."

Having thus endeavoured to establish the truth of man's dependence on God. I proceed now,

Secondly, To shew how this truth should be acknowledged and owned ; or how a dependence on God should be evidenced and exercised.

The text is one of many passages asserting that comfortable truth of a *particular* Providence running through the world with a sovereignty, care, and tenderness, or a divine notice and regard extending to *individuals* : upon which account revelation is an unspeakable blessing ; as this truth abundantly shines there-
in,

in, and is established thereby : which is not only the most solid foundation for contentment and an unfailing source of consolation, but full of instruction too. From what hath been said I hope it is evident to all, that we are dependents upon God, *necessarily*, or whether we will or no : in *this* light indeed it hath *no* virtue in it. But we may turn this necessity into a *virtue*, by making this dependence the matter of our choice, evidencing that choice by our temper and behaviour. The Psalmist in the text confesses it *in words* ; and sure none that understand the terms but must subscribe thereto with their *lips* ! This is the *lowest* degree of acknowledgment. But since we are capable of what is more expressive, and more adequate to the truth itself, it is required of us as a dutiful acknowledgment of it ; since none are too mean to be regarded by God, none too high to be dependents upon him. Now I think this truth *should*, and where it is really believed it *will*, be evidenced in the following ways.

1. By an humbleness of mind under any degree of prosperity, be it less or greater,

Humility answers to dependence. It is the natural effect, when the mind is under an habitual sense of it. And let the degree of prosperity be what it will, that should make no alteration in the humility or lowliness of the

Z 2

mind,

SERM. mind, because it makes no difference in the
 XIV. degree of our dependence: for high and low,
 { an abundance or narrowness of circumstance,
 are the same thing in that respect: the one is
 not a jot more a state of independency than
 the other. A thorough conviction that it is
 purely by and only, during the favour of God
 that our prosperity and happiness subsists, is in
 itself a most humbling thought. If I have
 this conviction, it will be the governing habi-
 tual sense of my mind, "All my present suf-
 " ficiency, in every article of it, is from God,
 " all is held at his pleasure: my life, my va-
 " rious delights, every individual blessing, are
 " continued by, or they expire upon, his will,
 " and all my enjoyment of them is by leave
 " obtained from him. I cannot secure any
 " thing from his reach; I cannot detain any
 " thing upon his demand; nor know any
 " thing of prosperity, under the greatest plen-
 " ty of outward good, but by his permission."
 This conviction should be reigning, and fre-
 quently returning; and all that we possess
 should be looked upon and enjoyed under the
 light that this sets it in. For this is only an *in-*
ward acknowledgment, that it is by the favour
 of God that our mountain stands strong. Now
 where there is this inwrought sense of our de-
 pendence upon God, it ought and it will give,
 persons

persons a just view of *themselves*: and what SERM.
views can an *absolute dependent* take of itself, XIV.

let outward circumstances be what they will, but very *lowly* ones? Though we are very sensible of the various blessings we possess, and take the enjoyment of them which is allowed us, yet we should not swell into any vain opinion of ourselves from our circumstances, nor pride ourselves in or unduly esteem ourselves for, what we have received from the divine bounty, and hold purely by the divine favour. It is a good passage in one of the apocryphal books, "Pride was not made for man." The meaning is, it cannot *belong* to, nor *become* such a creature as he is, in *any* circumstance. And *least of all* in that where it is most *common*, viz. in a flowing circumstance; unless a person hath reason to be proud of his being deeper in debt than others. When can we be so entrenched, I beseech you, as to justify the least boast? Jerusalem was surrounded with mountains, which were as natural fortifications, and rendered it very difficult for an army to approach it: insomuch that we are told all who knew it, could not believe that any adversary could ever enter its gates. Lam. iv. 12. We find also that from this advantage of situation, the Jews who inhabited Jerusalem were greatly lifted up, and become quite secure in their own

SERM. thoughts; the language of their vanity and
 XIV. security is thus represented, "Who shall come
 down against *us*? Or who shall enter into *our*
 habitations." Here is a general defiance given
 from the impregnableness of their city. But
 surely, herein they forgot their dependence
 upon God, or they could never have made so
 vain a challenge and boast. And to convince
 them of the folly and crime of their boasting,
 which was in effect a disclaiming of their de-
 pendence on God, the Prophet in the name of
 God, is ordered to tell them, "Behold I am
 against thee," and what are all thy securities
 against *me*, or against those *commissioned by me*?
 Jer. xxi. 13. By an humble and lowly mind
 then should we acknowledge our dependence
 upon God. And however God prospers us,
 however he *hath* favoured us, however he may
 still indulge us, a thorough conviction that all
 is held by and only during his favour, will in-
 fluence the general disposition of the mind in
 respect of the estimate of ourselves and cir-
 cumstances; and by this lowly estimate of
 ourselves should we evidence the conviction,
 and acknowledge that truth.

2. Our dependence on God should be ac-
 knowledged by stated prayer, and habitual
 gratitude.

These are *equally* expressive of this great
 truth: the one respects it as to the blessings
 that

that we *want* ; the other as to those we *have* and *possess* ; whilst both unite in this, and speak this language, “ That the divine favour “ is all to us, and the tenure we hold all by.”

SERM.
XIV.

This seems to be *one* eminent cause of the appointment of prayer and praise as duties ; viz. that the perfections and providence of God might be owned, and the sense of them kept up amongst mankind. By the institution of those duties we are assured of our dependence on God ; and by the practice of them we are directed how to acknowledge it. When we thus *seek to* our heavenly father, we confess, “ Our blessings are derivable from *him* ; that “ they are not in our own hand ; that they “ *flow* from *his* favour.” By our *grateful* disposition, and the expressions of it, we acknowledge “ that as he is the original fountain of “ all, he is the stay and support of all ; that “ he hath the sovereign disposal of all : that “ in our most flourishing and blooming circumstance we are the pensioners of his “ bounty ; and that what we have is and must “ be secured to us by his indulgence.” If I firmly believe that he upholds and repairs my earthly frame ; that if I have peace and friends, a competency or plenty of this world’s good, and health to crown and enjoy it, that I am also indebted to his favour for their continu-

SERM. ance, surely it is impossible but my heart must
 XIV. be filled with grateful sentiments, whilst they
 { do continue ! and the more habitual the sense
 of my dependence is, the more constant will
 those expressions of it be. It naturally works
 in those ways ; *instinct almost* leads us to dis-
 cover the sense thereof in that manner. The
 very *sweetness* of our prosperity, when once
believed to flow from God's favour as its source,
 and to be measured thereby as to its duration,
 would shew itself by gratitude, were the mind
 left to take *its own* way. Then all the plea-
 sure that our blessings yield us, would turn
 our thoughts to the spring of those blessings
 from whence that pleasure is derived. What
 is the matter of our rejoicing would be the
 matter of our thanksgiving. There would
 need no instructor, there would be no occasion
 for a prompter. When we seek the divine
 protection, blessing, and interposition, we
 cannot more expressly declare the deficiency of
 our own power, the scantiness of our own
 abilities ; and that whatever renders us safe
 and happy must be derived from him. And
 if prayer *to God* is a natural acknowledgment
 that from him the very ingredients of our fe-
 licity and comfort flow ; the sense of their
 being continued to us from time to time by
 his will, and during his pleasure, must as na-
 turally

turally inspire a love of gratitude: it is *his* SE 2 M.
hand, *his* kindness believed and discerned XIV.
therein, that infuses life and spirit into our
thanksgivings. Hereupon, whatever the lips
may confess, there cannot be a stronger evi-
dence of our insensibility of our being depen-
dent, than restraining of prayer; nor of a
sinful security and presumption than the want
of a grateful temper.

3. Our dependence on God should be evi-
denced by a firm and regular trust in him for
futurity.

This is an eminent virtue of a dependent
state; nor is any thing more reasonable for us
than the exercise of it on the Being in whom
we live and move, by whose favour we possess
and enjoy; nor is there any thing that doth
more honour to him. God hath wisely and
kindly drawn a veil over futurity: our condi-
tion is like that of children, who are unfit to
be let into the measures that are to be taken
with them: so that no human penetration can
say, what shall be in their own circumstances:
but we know in some respects what may be:
and amongst other things that the dispensati-
ons of providence may be widely different from
what they are at present. Now this being the pre-
rogative of heaven, and amongst the secret things
that the all-wise mind hath reserved to him-
self,

SERM. self, we are under a necessity of trusting in God,
XIV. according to the changing nature of our condition. By trusting in God, I do not mean, a confident expectation that he will grant *every* thing that we wish or desire: but a reliance on him, as wise, powerful, good, and faithful, and the commitment of our lot and circumstances to him, to do for us what *He sees* is best, and most conducive to our highest prosperity, our real felicity. This is making a virtue of necessity; and accommodating ourselves to what *must* be, in a manner that is most pleasing to God, and will have the greatest influence upon our enjoyment of what we possess. To say, that we have an absolute dependence on God, is to say, that his will hath an uncontrollable sovereign influence upon our circumstances, either to continue or change them. The acknowledgment of this then, must consist in a supreme reliance upon him; expecting *more* from him than from all second causes; *more* than from the kindness of our friends; from the best of our prospects; from the wisest measures we can take for ourselves; or the most abundant means that are lodged in our own hands. And there is the highest reason and wisdom in this, as we are sure there is a foundation for it in the perfections of the divine nature, from the exercise of them in the govern-

government of the world ; and as it is the most direct way to that favour of his, by which our prosperity is measured. The relying upon our own wisdom, wealth, and power, for our future security or felicity, is at once a disowning our dependence on God ; these stand in opposition to one another ; and therefore the avowing of the one, must be the disclaiming of the other, Jer. ix. 23, 24. SERM.
XIV.

4. Our dependence on God should be evidenced by the use of our prosperity, or of the blessings of which it is made up.

If the continuance of them are only during the divine pleasure, they are only *lent* us ; the *propriety* must still be in the same hand, in which the *disposal* of them is. This is very strongly and beautifully represented by the Prophet, in a threatening he was ordered to denounce in the name of God against Israel : Hosea ii. 9. “ I will take away *my* corn in the “ time thereof, and *my* wine in the season “ thereof, and will recover *my* wool and *my* “ flax.” Though he had *granted* these blessings, yet upon perverting the blessings of his providence to an ungrateful dishonouring of himself with them, he would make them to know that the *propriety* of them was in his own hand, by his withdrawing them. Sure I am, where a person’s subsistence and supply is absolutely deter-

SERM. determinable by the pleasure and favour of a
XIV. fellow-creature, it would be expected by all

that the dependent should consult the will of the benefactor in the application and use of the blessings, if he should think fit to prescribe and direct: and if there was only common sense and prudence, their dependent state would make them fearful of applying the gifts to uses that should *offend* those from whom they have received them. Our common reason then surely would dictate the right and religious use of our blessings from heaven; and lead us to consult the will and design of that Being in their improvement, were there any prevailing sense of their being continued only during the pleasure of that Being, when we know that he has given directions in that case. It is so *natural* a consequence and effect of such an apprehension, that it would not be uncharitable to pronounce of any, that they had discarded or disclaimed their dependence on God, who discovered no conscience in the use and improvement of their blessings; or who should merely consult their own wills and inclinations in the application or enjoyment of them; to a neglecting the designs of God, and the orders of heaven. Is it by the favour of God then that our mountain stands strong? Is it from his will and interposition that our prosperity

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prosperity is lengthened out? Do we believe SERM.
this? Do we attend to this, when we em- XIV.
ploy and apply those blessings, just as we might
be supposed to do, were we absolutely inde-
pendent, or were our felicity absolutely in our
own hands? That is, consulting only our own
fancies, appetites and passions.

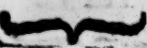
In these ways, amongst others, should we
practically evidence our dependence upon
God. These several things are the natural
and genuine effects of an habitual persuasion of
that great truth: by these and such like evi-
dences only, can we prove our belief thereof,
either to God's acceptance, or to the acquit-
tance of our own consciences.

I shall now close by some inferences.

1st Inf. We may hence see the great mis-
chief of inconsideration.

By this means the plainest and most con-
cerning truths are overlooked. The Psalmist
seems to me to impute his ungrateful and
foolish security, and his not discerning his de-
pendence upon God, to his *inattention*. His
prosperity made him thoughtless; and being
thoughtless he attended not to the most glar-
ing truth. As soon as he considered and re-
flected, the truth shone in his very eyes, as it
were, and he speaks with a kind of a surprize
at his own insensibility and blindness. It is

one

SERM. one of the chief ways, whereby the prosperity
 XIV. of fools destroys them, viz. by rendering them
 thoughtless; or introducing an aversion to the
 best use of their understandings, and the proper
 employment of their faculties. Prov. i.
 32. And, this being once the case, the truths
 that are as conspicuous as the sun, and are as
 obvious to our reason as the existence of objects
 about us are to our senses, are wholly un-
 known. To what but to this of inconsidera-
 tion, can the general insensibility of our depen-
 dence upon heaven be ascribed? when it is a
 truth immediately perceived, as soon as ever
 there is a serious thought; and acknowledged
 by the reason of every mind as soon as proposed.
 Is it not a word of course, and a cant phrase
 with some of the lowest and vilest of the peo-
 ple, when they speak of events, "It is what
 "pleased God." What is this but a confessi-
 on of an absolute dependence upon him? The
 not discerning this truth, from its abundant
 evidence, is owing to an inexcusable stupidity:
 much more when it is seen, not to acknow-
 ledge it. For persons to plead they did not
 think of it, makes the matter worse, rather
 than better: the *not considering* is the crime;
 and therefore can never be an excuse. The
 inconsideration which is the *cause*, is ungrate-
 ful, impious, wilful folly; this can never ex-

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tenuate the effect, the not *acknowledging* this SERM.
XIV.
truth; but on the contrary, it conveys and transfers its own *guilt* and reproach to it, whereby it is greatly aggravated. It is as evident as a thing can be to an attentive mind, that in the whole extent of our duty God's honour and our happiness are inseparably connected; the latter always bearing a proportion to the former. Accordingly, in the case before us, whatever we imagine, we shall find,
“ that the purest enjoyment of present good,
“ and the best preparation for future evil, are
“ the natural effect of an habitual persuasion
“ of our obligations to and dependence on
“ providence: or that all our comforts are the
“ divine gifts; and all our times are in the di-
“ vine hand.” We may set it down with ourselves as an infallible certainty, that thoughtlessness and inconsideration with respect to God, and the truths that he has taught us, both by reason and revelation, can never be justified. He hath so ordered matters from the intimations of our own minds, from the instructions and admonitions of his providence, as to leave us without excuse: therefore every defence will but aggravate our offence; every thing we can plead in our own favour, will but the more expose the badness of our disposition, and the ungrateful folly of our conduct.

2. How

SERM. 2. How necessary are the interruptions and
 XIV. rebukes of providence.

David plainly intimates, he did not reflect upon the influence that the favour of God had upon his circumstances, though nothing was more obvious and certain, *until* he met with an interruption to his prosperity. He did not consider the source of his peace, *till* he was involved in fresh trouble. The Psalmist observes of some, "that because they had no changes, therefore they had no regard to God or his providence, either by a serious reflection, or dutiful acknowledgment." Pf. lv. 19. And the prophet Jeremiah observes of Moab, that because their peace and prosperity was not interrupted, that that people were not amended. "Because he hath been at ease from his youth, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel," that is, hath not been driven from place to place, or been tossed from one circumstance to another, "therefore his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not changed;" that is, therefore they still retain their pride, presumption and impiety, Jer. xlviii. 11. How grateful soever an *unmixed* flow of prosperity might be to us, it is certain it would be of dangerous consequence, as to the moral dispositions of our minds, and as to another world. Our own experience tells us, such is

our

our present infirmity, that in a very grateful circumstance and affluent state, it may be said of the very best, that they are in great danger of being misled, of sinking into an animal life, of losing their noblest sentiments, and with-holding their most just and important regards. Yea, we find, that very great interruptions are *hardly* sufficient to keep us attentive to truth and duty, to make us thoughtful, or to keep us safe. We will make hard shift, but we will intoxicate ourselves by indulgencies, and lose our minds and hearts in pleasures, with all the mixtures of pain attending them. What would it then be, if the scene was *pure* prosperity, and the way all softness and gratification? If the stupidity, impiety, and security of mankind is so great, under almost any considerable degree of prosperity, how probably should we forget both God and ourselves, how unmindful should we be of futurity, of eternity, and how unprovided of any felicity beyond what we are dying from, had we no rebukes, no allays? Hath not the long series of peace, plenty, and liberty been almost the ruin of this land, in respect of piety and virtue? We have seen that God can bring us to a sense of our dependence upon himself, by what his own hand *sends*, by what his own hand *withholds*; and so circumstance it too, as

SERM. to force us to confess, that it was the hiding of
 XIV. *his* face that was the cause of our trouble, or
 that the interruption of our prosperity was
 providence not chance. But is it not the
 height of sottishness, to make such interruptions *necessary* to convince us of a truth, which
 from its glaring evidence we must ever find it
 hard to forget? And I am persuaded that many
 of the ungrateful mixtures in our cup, of the
 clouds in our circumstances, and damps to our
 joys, are occasioned by our security and forget-
 fulness of providence, into which from our
 prosperity and peace we are apt insensibly to
 slide. Our *piety* or regard of God is so very
 changeable and inconstant, that it is no won-
 der, much less a ground of *accusation* and *cen-
 sure*, that our happiness is so. On the con-
 trary, the wonder is, that our mountain should
 stand *so long* as it often doth, whilst the God
 in whose hands is our breath, and whose
 are all our ways, we glorify, we remember,
 we acknowledge no more, Dan. v. 23. this
 was brought as an heavy charge, and in justi-
 fication of a judicial reverse of circumstances.
 If love and bounty render us insensible, may
 we not expect to be awakened by suffering?
 What a figure must mankind make in the eye
 of a superior order of beings, what an appearance
 must every one that is yet reasonable make in
 their

their *own* eyes, when they reflect upon the state of the case, the too common case, which is this: "That if the divine bounty doth but

SERM.
XIV.

"flow, if God do but secure his own blessings to us for any length of time, all regards to him and concern with him shall be thrown aside, and poor, impotent, nothing creatures, shall set up for independency."

Can there be any thing shocking to the rational, any thing shameful to the generous mind, if this be not both? "That we should

"live *by thee*, O Lord, and yet disown our dependence, or live without a thought of it!

"yea, that we should be the *most inclined* to do

"so, when from our prosperity we have the

"loudest call to acknowledge thee! what re-

"bukes! what interruptions may we not ex-

"pect for our conviction, and to bring us to

"our senses and our duty." God can soon

make those to hang the head, that have lifted

it up the highest: and how reasonable is it to

expect he should do so, when creatures carry

it with the insolency of an independency

on himself! Upon the whole then, this

world, as changeable, as afflictive as it

is, is good enough; unless *we* were better.

Nay we should find it a much more comfort-

able state than we do in point of *enjoyment*, did

we not even *necessitate* providence, if I may so

A a 2

speak,

SERM. speak, to embitter it in order to our *amend-*
 XIV. *ment.* If we cannot bear prosperity, but pre-
 ~~~~~sently must discard our dependence on heaven  
 and set up for ourselves, sacrificing to ourselves,  
 which is generally the case, is it any reflection  
 upon providence to break the chain, and to di-  
 sturb the calm, by dispensations of a *different*  
 kind? No; they are necessary to open our  
 eyes, to bring us to thought, to render us just  
 and grateful to God, and to save us from un-  
 doing ourselves by the very kindness of heaven:  
 and it is very happy for us, if all together pro-  
 duce these effects.

3. How aggravated is wickedness under  
 prosperity, or under an easy, peaceful circum-  
 stance! which may be the case where there is  
 not an abundance of wealth.

How aggravated I say is *wickedness* under  
 such a circumstance! Whence is it that our  
 lot or portion is fallen in a pleasant place, or  
 that we have a goodly heritage? Is it not from  
 the favour of God? If it be, is *vice* a proper  
 return for it; or is it the way to secure it? Is  
*forgetting* of God, to which all wickedness  
 may be reduced, a requital for his *remembering*  
 us? Is offending him with the very blessings  
 by which he gratifies us, treating him well?  
 Let us judge by our common sentiments of  
 gratitude and justice; and I am persuaded we  
 shall



shall find ourselves obliged to own, that such a behaviour under prosperity is *doubled* evil. SERM. XIV.

Who can read the account given of God's appearances for the Israelites, and their behaviour upon them towards him, without a sensible resentment and indignation? He did marvellous things for them, things surprizingly strange and equally kind: he divided the sea for them, that they might pass through, when they could no other way escape from their enemies: he guided them day and night: he clave the very rocks in the wilderness, and that way supplied them with water. These were his wondrous acts on their behalf. What were their returns? Why it is said, they sinned yet the more against him. The more he blessed them, the more they displeased him; the more he appeared for them, the more they provoked him, Psal. lxxviii. 12—17. Doth not our common sense of justice and gratitude join in *condemning them*? And is not such a return as justly to be condemned when *our own case*? Is it not proportionably hateful, and meriting our own resentment? It still *rises* in aggravation, when the happy flowing circumstance is the *cause* of such a behaviour. And Oh, how often is it the case! how often do persons *commence* vitious, upon a profusion

SERM. fusion of blessings, upon the concurrence of  
 XIV. health and riches, with the gratifications resulting from them! and upon the seeming firmness of their mountain, give up themselves to an unrestrained indulgence, to an undistinguishing insolence, to an impious scorning! Setting their mouths against the heavens, and levelling their contempt and defiance *particularly* at their Maker! When one sees such a poor creature in these ways, buzzing and fluttering in the rays and warmth of prosperity, as insects do in the gleams of sun-shine, can we suppose that he ever thinks to any purpose, or makes one solid reflection? If he did, would he not see immediately, that he was turning obligations into grounds of contempt? returning evil for good? and provoking the displeasure of one, upon whose favour all the causes and opportunities of his indulgences rest? By how much the more any creature is delighted with its circumstances, surely the *more*, not the *less*, doth it owe to the providence that hath placed it there, and that continues it therein for an hour together. And if the standing of our mountain is so desirable, surely where it doth there is much in it that is *memorable*; and if memorable, surely it merits an acknowledgment; and what acknowledgment of it can there be amidst impiety and disregard of heaven?



heaven? Where this is not *seen* and *felt* too, SERM.  
whatever remains, yet it is certain the *mind*, XIV.  
the *man*, the *reason* is *lost*. }

4. There is no circumstance that can justify security, or render us independent on God.

If we had a window into many breasts, I believe we should find, that one reason why persons are so very intent upon an abundance of temporal blessings is this, that they might lay such a foundation that time itself should not wear, nor any possible tempests overthrow. The english of which is, that they would be in a capacity to defy providence; or at least, that they would lay up so much for so many years, that they might not stand in need of God. But let us make what supposition we please as to the degree of prosperity, and suppose it also to have taken place, yet even in *this* circumstance, if the text may determine, security is equally foolish and unreasonable as in any other; and the favour of God is as necessary to maintain it, as if it were ever so slender. Our mountain may be so strong in respect of our fellow-creatures, that *their* power, *their* envy or unrighteousness, may not be able to shake it: we may be so entrenched that *they* cannot reach us. But what avail any circumstances against the stroke of providence?

SERM. What difference can any degree of prosperity  
 XIV. make, with respect to the will and power of  
 God? From hence, the person that is most sheltered and fortified is as liable and as much exposed as the most naked and destitute. Be our blessings ever so numerous, and our hold ever so firm, yet probably there is *one* that yields us more delight than *most*, than *all* the rest. In this case one may say in the Psalmist's figure, that upon *that* our mountain *chiefly* rests. If in this case providence should touch *that*, would not *all* shake? If *that* should be removed, what becomes of the *relish* of the *rest*? They probably will stand for nothing. If our *mountain* stands strong, it is much if from *that very cause*, the *mind* is not weak. If so, a very slender stroke of providence is enough to bring all to the ground. Alas! it is not what we *lose*, but what we can *bear*. And when by indulgences we have weakened our minds, or by partial affection to some particular blessing we have staked our peace and happiness upon it, there needs no more to destroy our most towering hopes or most fancied security, and to bring all our triumphs down, than for providence to touch us in *that particular* part. The very nature of the thing would tell us, if considered, that our dependence



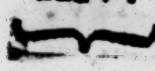
dence upon God must be equal at *all times*, SERM. and in *every* circumstance. It is not less so, XIV. when our prosperity seems most established, than when it is interrupted, and under the threatening of a period. And if security cannot be justified in prosperity, nor any degree of such a state render us independent, you will allow I believe, that no other circumstance can.

I shall make but one reflection more, and that is this.

5. If our happiness depends more on the providence of God than on all other causes, nay, if, as I may say, it is *absolutely* governed by his pleasure, then religion, or the practical fear of God by worship and obedience is of greater importance to us than any other means, and more at the foundation of our felicity than any other way and method of life. And the reason is plain: because that is the surest engagement of providence.

Were there a *necessary* chain and connection of things; did events uncontrollably and unfailingly answer to the degree and quality of visible causes, the foundation of religion would be sapt, and all prayer at once set aside. For upon that supposition, it would be vanity and insolence. If God only *looks on* to see his own  
*fixed*

SERM. *fixed* establishment take place, without ever

XIV.  interesting himself or interposing in the affairs of his creatures, it would be the highest absurdity to interest him therein; or to expect that he would alter his establishment upon our requesting him so to do. And what is prayer, in many cases wherein we make use of it? but an application to God to interpose and to over-rule events in a way different from what the ordinary course of things would produce, or from what things in all their appearances to us are bringing about.

But whatever vain and foolish men may wish or say in their heart, there is, there is a God, who exercises a particular care over every individual, and who may, with hopes of regard, be applied to for his favour to continue our mountain as it may be strong at present, or to establish it when shaken. And this hope of his favour by special agency and interpositions, doth at once destroy fatality, and encourage prayer. Not that we can expect such a favour as to *perpetuate* our blessings, or to secure the standing of our mountain *for life*. This, considering what we are, and the state we are in, would not be an advantage. It would not be consistent with the divine favour towards us, nor answer the designs of the di-

vine



vine dispensations in general, which is our *real* SERM. felicity. God *doth* take a pleasure in his crea- XIV. tures prosperity : it is eternally true : and for that *very reason* sometimes threatens and diminishes their earthly blessings, and interrupts their peace and enjoyment as to worldly scenes. In this indeed he judges of our prosperity *differently*, but much *more justly*, than we are apt to do : but both his wisdom, and his goodness, is apparent therein, whilst we are sure, it is to promote that temper and practice in us, that may secure his favour towards us, upon which our real prosperity and our truest enjoyment of this life depends. This is the genuine influence and consequence of true and uniform religion. We should always distinguish between *possessions* and *happiness* : and there is this very good reason for it ; because we know they are often *separated*. *Possessions* are not the evidences of a moral or religious character : *They* are amongst the things which are, to *our* apprehension, promiscuously distributed : good and bad are not intended to be distinguished thereby. But as to the *happiness* of circumstance, or that the soul should *enjoy* this good, by a peaceful, chearful, self-possession, *this* is from the *hand of God*, that is, it is a special gift, and therefore sure in any degree, only to those who keep his commandments, and there-  
by

SERM. *fixed* establishment take place, without ever  
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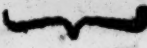


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by

SERM. by keep themselves in his love. Eccles. ii.  
XIV. 24.

Religion hath a *natural* influence upon the establishing our prosperity, beyond every thing else. Upon the supposition that providence hath poured out blessings upon us, that we have a confluence of every thing desirable, that we are sensible of it, and are in a capacity to taste and relish it, religion *heightens* the enjoyment, and *secures* it. Where piety presides, virtue prevails, temperance and sobriety reigns; liberality diffuses itself indeed to the happiness of others, whilst all self-indulgences hurtful to body or mind, all waste of substance and destructive excesses are prevented: order and harmony is established; and by order, peace. So that such are thereby preserved from those storms and tempests of their own creating, by which our mountain is most frequently shaken and undermined; and are comparatively subject only to the stroke of providence. But as to *that*, religion hath an influence upon the continuance of our prosperity *beyond* every thing else. For it procures the divine favour, and that engages the divine providence in very favourable aspects and interpositions. It not only admits, but encourages an hope and trust on a wisdom, power, and goodness, sufficient for the security



city of our mountain under any attack, or the SERM.  
establishing of it again, though permitted to XIV.  
be shaken. It preserves from those *disquieting*   
passions, those *overwhelming* sorrows, those  
*dispiriting* apprehensions by which our prof-  
perity is much more affected than by the  
stroke of providence itself. By religion we  
have a guide and a guardian; we have an all-  
wise and almighty friend at hand, to pre-  
vent or support, to over-rule, restore, or build  
up, as he sees will be most for our real prof-  
perity and truest felicity. Tempests rising  
in the breast may well subside, and anxious  
cares vanish, whilst with triumphant faith  
the pious soul draws near to God from time  
to time in all the confidence of prayer.  
What would our fears have more to calm  
them, our hopes and desires to fulfil them, our  
delights to preserve them, than when they rest  
on a power, wisdom, and goodness perma-  
nent, and equal to every circumstance? and  
for this rest religion is our warrant. In all  
turns of life, the perfections, the providence,  
and promises of God, are a source of solace  
and serenity, greatly beyond what the most  
agreeable possessions or the best prospects can  
yield.

Since

SERM. Since then there is this important reality  
 XIV. and inestimable value in the divine favour,  
 that it interests the divine providence on behalf of its objects, of what importance and worth must religion be, that engages that favour? Methinks self-love should strongly carry us thereto, as to the best security of our present felicity. Are we very happy at present, and can we but desire its continuance? Let us remember it is by the divine favour that it is most effectually subserved. To that we owe all the enjoyments we possess, and on that all our future hopes depend. But how is that to be obtained? How? but by the worship, service, and obedience of the great Governor and universal Disposer. For this then let us resolve whatever it cost us, whatever we may be thought of, or suffer for it. Let this preside and lead, as of the first importance in life, and let the world see that it doth so; let it direct and influence us in the use and improvement of all the enjoyments of life: let us ever esteem it, as by the practice we shall find it, to give the highest relish to every comfort, and to be the greatest security for its continuance: and though all things about us are continually changing, to which change we in every circumstance are  
 also



also liable, yet by this means we shall have SERM.  
the all-sufficient God with us whilst our prof- XIV.  
perity lasts; and shall live under the prof-  
pect of the infinitely more desirable effects  
of his favour in a kingdom that shall never  
be moved; and in a bliss that shall never die  
or fade.



SERMON

SERM. Since then there is this important reality  
XIV. and inestimable value in the divine favour,  
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pect of the infinitely more desirable effects  
of his favour in a kingdom that shall never  
be moved; and in a bliss that shall never die  
or fade.



SERMON

to little, yet by this means we shall have  
 all-fatherly God with us which cannot  
 be less; and shall live under the  
 of the infinitely more abundant  
 his love in a measure that shall never  
 be lost, and in a life that shall never be

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# S E R M O N XV.



## RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.



PROVERBS X. 21.

*The lips of the righteous feed many.*

WHERE religion is, as the great insti-  
 tutor and lawgiver intended it should  
 be, a principle ; where it has the power and  
 influence ever accompanying what deserves  
 that name, there will be an *uniformity* of be-  
 haviour. Then every part of the private or  
 social life, will be tinctured therewith ; and  
 every power and faculty will be *ready* to dis-

SERM.  
XV.

VOL. II.

B b

cover

SERM. cover and promote it, as a proper opportunity  
XV. and occasion shall offer. It is a great pleasure  
to find there are so many, (May God encrease  
their number!) who from their constant attendance on the more solemn services of religion, and avowing it by the external badges of the christian character, whilst custom and fashion are against them, and solicit them another way; that there are so many, I say, of whom, without any strain of charity, we are bound to believe they act herein from principle. The persuasion I have of this as to many here, encourages me to hope for their regards, whilst I insist upon an article of religion wherein I think christians in general are greatly defective; and that is, *religious conversation*. Upon a serious reflection on a general course, I apprehend it will appear to you as it doth to me, that there is so little of this in the world, as to prompt one to think, that there is a general agreement to conceal or shut it out of conversation; as if it was not intended or fit to enter as a subject thereof; or even to shew itself at such seasons.

The text, I think, as well as many other passages of sacred writ, manifests that this is a great mistake: and to this our reason and conscience will give their testimony, if the matter be impartially considered. From the

words



words I have read we see, that it enters into the SERM.  
 very character of the righteous, or of those who XV.  
 are so before God. "Their lips feed many," To  
 what but to the *discourse* and *conversation* of the  
 righteous can the *lips* relate? What can they re-  
 spect, but the tenor and drift thereof? What but  
*this* can these words assert? "That they *converse*  
 " like righteous persons; like themselves: they  
 " will not only avoid what is inconsistent with  
 " religion, what is reproachful to themselves,  
 " and hurtful to others; but from inclination  
 " they will *introduce* and *chuse* subjects, that  
 " shall be improving and instructive to others  
 " in wisdom and goodness; that shall *edify*,  
 " or as the Apostle expresses it, *minister grace*,  
 " or spiritual advantage, to the hearers. Eph.  
 " iv. 29. " out of the abundance of their  
 " hearts," where a sense of God and a love of  
 goodness, a desire of holiness and heaven  
 prevails, "their mouth speaketh:" the reign-  
 ing passion and governing bias within, will  
 betray itself by a tenor and vein of conversa-  
 tion of the *same kind*.

I am very sensible, I am upon a subject that  
 so little enters into the practice or thought of  
 numbers of mankind as a branch of religion,  
 or obligatory and necessary upon any account,  
 that it is looked on as highly improper upon  
 many accounts. Not to instance in the licen-

SERM. tious and prophane, by whom every thing that  
 XV. would awaken the conscience, or better the  
 heart, is very sollicitously banished the conversation, whilst the reverse thereto is not only introduced, but encouraged and promoted—not to say any thing of *those confederates against* religion, it is too manifest that even amongst *those* who would be deemed, and indeed are, *friends* to religion, you shall too seldom hear any thing from their lips, that discovers any knowledge of it or concern with it: by too many of these, the starting of any thing that *savours* of devotion and piety, or discovers a mind tinctured therewith, is more carefully shunned, and more speedily suppressed, than downright nonsense, slander, or impertinence.

But be it so: since I think upon the most impartial reflection that such a behaviour is very reproachful, and that it is of considerable moment that religion enter into the *conversation* as a *subject* thereof, I shall offer you my own free sentiments upon it: addressing myself therein to your reason and consciences, whose conviction I seek; and whose concurrence I hope for in favour of them.

Before I proceed to particulars, I would state the case; that you may have the clearer notion of what I am pleading for: which will at the  
 same



same time prevent some cavils, that might otherwise arise in the mind. SERM.  
XV.

Be pleased to observe then, that I am not speaking of those seasons of conversation which are *appropriated* to the particular purposes of trade and commerce; to the execution of publick offices and trusts; or to the management of civil affairs. No: let the design of these seasons be kept to; and the special intention of such assemblies be attended to. To introduce religion into *these* meetings, as the subject of conversation, would be ridiculous and absurd, and would be the exposing both of that and of ourselves. It is enough in these cases, that we act under the influence of the *inward principle*, by maintaining all good fidelity; and discharging our part in those affairs in simplicity and godly sincerity.

Again: our blessed Lord hath compared some of mankind to dogs and swine in respect of their *dispositions* towards matters of a religious and moral nature, Matth. vii. 6. The *former* implies a furious hatred and abhorrence of them; such a malignity of heart against every thing of that kind, as to fire them with resentment at all attempts for their amendment and instruction. The *latter* implies a stupid contempt of such things, the loss of all relish, or even the sense of their excellency and worth.

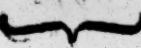
SERM. Now with persons of such minds, he hath  
XV. forbid us to converse upon such subjects; be-  
cause they would be not only thrown away  
upon them, but they would be exasperated by  
them: they would treat such things, and their  
most friendly monitors and instructors, with  
scorn, rage, and abusive revilings. This is  
the general import of our Lord's counsel in  
that place: "Give not that which is holy un-  
to dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine,  
least, as is to be expected, the *latter* trample  
them under their feet, and the *former* turn  
again and rent you." In these cases we are  
not only to consider the real excellency and  
value of the things themselves, which he here  
stiles *holy*, and compares to *pearls*; but we  
must consider the dispositions of the persons  
also, to whom they are offered. According  
to this advice of our great master we are to  
exercise prudence and discretion in the intro-  
ducing of religious subjects into conversation;  
and not to throw them out indiscriminately,  
or in all company: not in that particularly  
where we are likely to do more hurt than  
good; and where we have the greatest reason  
to believe they will be trampled on, and will  
be returned with a vilifying abuse both of re-  
ligion and ourselves.

Nor



Nor am I encouraging what some stile *private conferences*, which have generally had their *rise* in affectation and conceit; and have produced such a dogmaticalness and vanity as hath introduced great confusion into societies. There is great danger thereby of religion degenerating and sinking into talk; and going no further than the employment of the tongue: whenever this is the case, the appearance of it is odious; and the more sacred the subjects are, the worse is such a prostitution of them. SERM. XV.

I would desire it may be observed once more, that I am not speaking of or promoting *disputations* and *controversies* in religion, as the subjects or end of conversation. Doubts of this kind may be occasionally put to others, where there is a sincere desire of satisfaction, and a prospect of obtaining it. But where the controverting of points, and the agitating of questions, wherein sincere christians may differ one from another, is the proposed end of conversation, I fear there is very little light or benefit obtained thereby. Lips so employed, though they are the lips of the righteous, seldom feed any thing in each other but pride and passion; they gender heat and strife, to the loss of piety and charity; and though the disputes are of a religious kind, they are generally vain and unprofitable.

SERM. Having premised these things to prevent  
 XV.  cavils, I would now specify what I am recommending; or rather what is matter of obligation, from the text and many other passages of sacred writ; and that is this: "That  
 " those who believe the doctrines of religion,  
 " and avow the practice of it, who live under  
 " the same roof, or who shall associate  
 " together from friendship and affection,  
 " should allow a share to, and *season* their  
 " mutual converses with, *those* subjects, that  
 " might at once enlighten, improve, and  
 " make each other wiser and better."

This I propose to establish as a truth; and to engage to as a practice, by some general arguments, which will suit all. To begin.

1. Religion furnishes with a great variety of interesting and entertaining subjects.

Those who are acquainted with it in theory only, can never be at a loss for a topick of conversation; much less those who have the practical, the experimental knowledge of it. What scope do the all transcending excellencies and perfections of the wonderful God yield? with the several relations which he *originally* bears to us? and *other* relations which he hath *assumed* purely for our greater encouragement and consolation? What full employment for the mind and the tongue too,  
 doth



doth the wise, the kind, the paternal providence of God suggest? From the vast variety of blessings which may flow from thence to creatures so impotent, indigent, ignorant and frail as we find ourselves to be: much more from the abundant testimony which our own *experience* thereof furnishes us with, of his condescending regard, and tender care, in suitable and timely interpositions; guiding our steps under mazes and perplexities; being a covert to us from many a storm, a shelter from many a tempest; supporting and carrying us through many a trial we never thought we could sustain; scattering many a thick cloud that hung over us; exchanging the spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise; making up our losses, raising us up friends; and not only *preserving* life, but *sweetening* it to us, whilst we were hourly liable to what might not only have interrupted its comfort, but brought it to a period.

Nor are our communings one with another *limited* to these subjects: they are abundantly supplied, and bespoke by what still raises the wonder and encreases the pleasure of the human mind; even by that work of our redemption, accomplished by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; wherein the compassionate regard of heaven towards the sinful children

SERM.  
XV.

SERM. children of men is displayed in the *riches* of  
 XV. it : proclaiming pardon to the condemned;  
 { deliverance to the captive ; strength to the  
 weak ; acceptance of the sincere ; encourage-  
 ment to the timorous ; ministering to the joy of  
 hope ; opening a prospect of, and marking out  
 a way, to final victory and immortal honour.

To specify one thing more : with how much agreeable *matter* for converse would our own reflections supply us, from the evidences we have had of a divine regard, in the grant of the petitions we have laid before, and in the success of the applications we have made to the divine throne ? how often have we been led to seek to God, when he hath heard us, and hath not turned away our prayer nor his mercy from us ?

These particulars I have mentioned, not only to evidence the abundant matter, with which religion supplies us for conversation, but to point them out, as subjects about which those who fear God, when they are together, should speak to one another ; or upon which they should actually exchange thoughts. Now upon this summary view, can any christians be so unacquainted with their religion, as to want matter for discourse ? Can they be at a loss, when the exercise of their reason, the discoveries of revelation, and their own experi-  
 ence



ence reflected upon, will suggest such a variety? And if they have either the judgments of men, or the faith of christians, must they not acknowledge these to be infinitely more entertaining, *important*, and *concerning* topicks, than any others which usually fill up the successive hours? SERM. XV.

2. There is nothing more common or natural than for persons to converse according to their *particular profession*; and even to engross a considerable share of it, when those of the same profession are together.

It is found so in all arts and sciences, in every calling and occupation, from the most honourable employment to that of the meanest: and by this you may often discover the business and employment of particular persons, even in mixed company, if there be but two or more of the *same* profession. How often do they in a manner *leave* the rest, and, even disregard them, for a time, singling out each other in order to converse in *their own way*, and about things relating to their *own* particular employment and character! Is not this the very case of the avowed libertine? Doth not his speech bewray him? May not his principles and character be known, by the strain of his conversation into which he naturally falls; especially if he hath any to second and

coun-

SERM. countenance him? nay, doth he not even *seek*  
 XV. occasions, and lay hold of very innocent ex-  
 pressions in discourse to proclaim himself a li-  
 bertine, by the *overflowings* of his *naughtiness*,  
 as the Apostle phrases it; or by the loose and  
 indecent *turns* that he shall give to what is  
 said? Now is not religion every one's *calling*  
 and greatest *concern*? Is it not the *avowed*  
 profession of every christian? Would they not  
 be known by their regards to it? What then  
 is more *natural* than for *such* to converse in  
 their own dialect, and about affairs respecting  
 their general calling, for their mutual enter-  
 tainment, for the information of their minds,  
 and the gratification of their taste and re-  
 lishes?

Every one, who hath made any observation  
 of what is met with in company, must know,  
 that there are oftentimes those subjects of  
 learning, and trade, started, that are great-  
 ly *above* the capacity of *many* who are pre-  
 sent, in which they cannot join for want  
 of understanding. And there are other sub-  
 jects also, which too often engross a consi-  
 derable part of the discourse, of which many  
 present are as ignorant, and for which they  
 have no more relish than for those of the former  
 kind: such as fashions in dress; the beauties  
 of plays; the fulness of the play-house; the  
 grace.



gracefulness of the actors; the persons that were present; and the raptures of the entertainment; with several articles of such idle and insignificant stuff, which are as much below any one to give any attention to, whom education hath qualified for the exercise of reason, or who hath any notion of things that have any moral worth and excellency in them. Now if *this* conversation shall pass without censure, as it generally doth, though some are excluded from bearing a part therein, and suffer a penance thereby, I would fain know what reason there *can* be for the charge of impertinency in dropping a few words, or in expatiating a little, upon what favours of religion, upon what befriends and would promote virtue: in taking occasion from any thing said to make a pious and useful reflection; or in introducing something that may recal persons to the proper use of their understandings and thought, when we are in company that are civilized, and *no enemies* to virtue. It is as *natural* for the christian to improve conversation this way, as it is for the others to enter into their *particular* ways of converse. And if the want of *taste* and *relish* for religious subjects, in any we are in company with, renders the starting of them an indiscretion and impertinency, I am sure the same

SERM.  
XV.

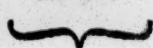
SERM. same *censure* and *condemnation* belongs, at least,  
 XV. *equally* to those other topicks, by all the laws  
 of reason, of good manners, and in the judgment of every one's conscience.

3. Our firm and lively belief of the most weighty and important truths of religion, and a love to the practice of it, will lead to a religious conversation.

The apostle assures us, "that if they are believed with the heart," that is sincerely, so as to produce righteousness, "there will be a confession or a discovery of them *with the mouth*," which, amongst other ways of *confessing* them, may as justly include *this* I am speaking of, Rom. x. 10. Our Saviour also hath laid down this maxim, that "out of the abundance of the heart," or from the *affection* that prevaileth *there*, "the *mouth will speak*," Matth. xii. 34. which may most justly be applied to my present purpose. As the heart that is filled with *wickedness*, discharges its poisonous and infectious steams by the tongue; so where religion hath got possession of the heart, and rules there with power, the conversation will be strongly tinged with it; and the discoursing on those topicks will be readily embraced and pursued upon any *given* opportunity, as a self-gratification: the heart filled therewith, will give vent to itself

*this*



*this way.* Things slightly assented to, and to SERM.  
 which the heart bears a great indifferency, may XV.  
 be easily suppressed, and kept to one's self:   
 but those, of whose reality, worth, and mo-  
 ment, the mind is most fully persuaded and  
 assured, and which lie near the heart, will  
 be ever *forcing* their way into the lips; and  
 become the most agreeable and entertaining  
 subject of discourse. We find this to be true  
 as to all the objects of sense, as the mind is  
 prevailingly filled with them; and as the ru-  
 ling affection is set upon them: whether it be  
 honour, riches, or pleasure, may be soon known  
 by the tenor of the conversation. According  
 as it is the one or the other, how readily do  
 persons enter upon the subject? how feelingly,  
 and sensibly, do they lay hold of every thing  
 leading to it? and with what a *relish* do they  
 carry on the discourse, and hear the subject  
 talked on by others? and shall the friends of  
 religion have *nothing* to say of it and for it  
 amongst *themselves*? shall they be shy of drop-  
 ping any thing, that looks like a regard there-  
 to? This can be accounted for no other way,  
 that I know of, than from the *weakness*  
 of their faith in the important truths,  
 which they profess to believe; from the  
*want* of an experimental knowlege of  
 them, and an affection to them. Was  
 it

SERM. it not for *this*, we should as readily fall upon  
 XV. those infinitely greater and more interesting  
 things as the subject of conversation, as others  
 do upon the trifling objects of their mean or  
 vile passions. And though it is not attended  
 to, I apprehend it an indisputable truth; that  
 it is *only that* belief of religious principles, *that*  
 lively sensation and feeling of their practical  
 power and efficacy, which strongly disposes  
 to a religious converse, that constitutes the  
 religious *character*. The ground of this my  
 sentiment is, that the scripture hath laid so  
 considerable a stress upon it as to represent it  
 an *ingredient* in the character of the righteous.  
 Thus the Psalmist describes *such* by *this* property,  
 “that the mouth of the righteous speaketh wis-  
 dom, and his tongue talketh of judgment:” that  
 is, they are wont to season their ordinary conver-  
 sation, with something pious and good, that  
 they may impart something to others that may  
 render them wiser and better, Pf. xxxvii. 30.  
 To the same purpose Solomon speaks, Prov. x.  
 11. “The mouth of a righteous person is a  
 well of life:” that is, the conversation of such  
 a one is like a good spring, pouring out some-  
 thing continually for the benefit and re-  
 freshment of those he converses with. See  
 also the 31st verse. To mention no more pas-  
 sages: the prophet Malachi hath remarked it



as the practice of those who *feared the Lord* SERM. in his time, and as the *genuine effect* of that XV. divine principle within, that “they often spake one to another:” chap. 3. 16. And how can we suppose they spoke to one another? but agreeable to their character, even in the language and dialect of those *who feared the Lord*. What could be the subject of their conversation? but that which is declared to be the subject of their thoughts, which was the *name of God*. Whilst others impiously vilified it, they vindicated it to one another; and endeavoured to promote the most honourable thoughts of him, and to excite the most pious affections towards him, amongst themselves. Whilst others were throwing out the most unjust prejudices against the ways of God, they were industrious to fortify one another against the contagion; and by mutual exhortations, arguments, and encouragements to support the credit of them amongst themselves, and to hearten one another to a firm adherence to them. Thus were *our* belief of, and love to, the great things of religion in any power or eminency, they would manifest themselves by our *words* or our *discourse*, as well as by our works; and the *favoury kind* of communications, which we have one with another as we walk, or are together, are both

SERM. an *evidence* of the strength of our inward  
 XV. graces, and also a very considerable *means* of  
 ~~~~~ *preserving* them from corruption and decay.  
 Which brings me to a fourth consideration.

4. Very *signal* advantages and benefits respecting religion, will accrue from such a conversation.

The wise man hath laid down a general assertion, "that death and life, are in the power of the tongue," Prov. xviii. 21. which may import *this* as well as other things, that it is not presently to be imagined, what hurt or good may accrue from the use or employment of it, or according to the tenor of the conversation. As *evil* communication is sadly and daily found to corrupt good manners; to lay minds waste, and to destroy a great deal of good; so would *good* conversation be found a very apt and powerful means to preserve and raise what is merely good and excellent in one another, to a greater perfection.

Reading and meditating on divine things, is very serviceable towards the attaining the *knowledge* of them: but it may be there is no way by which their beauty is more strongly discerned, their influence so naturally insinuated, and so easily experienced, as in conversation between kindred souls who fear the Lord. Religious truths when confined to a person's
 own

own mind, have not that influence which they have, when they are discoursed upon between pious minds: when they are talked over with the freedom and familiarity of conversation, the mind is kept fixed upon them, it is led to exert itself; the subjects are opened, and set to view; from whence we obtain further light therein; a deeper impression is derived from them; and we are very differently affected with them, than when we *muse* upon them *alone*. As the heart of one sincere christian answers very much to the heart of another, in respect of their desires, their aims, their pleasures, their deficiencies, and weaknesses, so by a mutual exchange of thoughts between such, they may attain to a better knowledge of *themselves*. Some who through an excess of diffidence or bodily melancholy, have very dark and discouraging thoughts of themselves, may, by conversing with other christians, often hear their own burdens and difficulties in *others* complaints; they may find, that what *they* have to struggle with, *others* lament, and are labouring under as well as they: that the doubts which hang upon *their* minds as to their eternal state, do also possess the breast of *others*, of whom they have a better opinion, than they have of themselves. Finding this, *some* light breaks in upon

SERM. their benighted minds ; the cloud in some mea-

XV. sure is broken : and their hopes of themselves, in
 some degree, are brighter and stronger. By *talking* these things over, we may talk *ourselves*, or our friends may talk *us*, into a better frame. *We* may receive instruction, as to the proper measures to be taken for the recovery of our peace when broken ; and be prompted to take them as our pious friends suggest the methods *they* have taken, and assure us of the success that *they* have found from them.

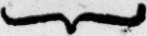
By such a conversation, also *graces* are mutually strengthened, and pious devout affections are mutually excited. When christians relate to one another, the history of their own experience as to the kind providence of God interposing on their behalf ; succouring, supporting, and assisting them beyond their expectation ; when they hear each others narrative of the divine grace, what pious admiration, gratitude, hope, love and trust doth it excite in one another's breast ! how do their hearts burn within them ! how is the holy and heavenly flame fan'd and encreased thereby ! what encouragement and consolation doth their mutual testimony impart to each other ! and what a noble christian sympathy, and pleasure in one another's happiness, is hereby promoted !

Should

Should the conversation turn upon reflections on the degeneracy of mankind, the deceitfulness of the heart, the corruption of the world, and the manifest decay of vital religion; these subjects naturally provoke each other to wise reflections on *themselves*; they are looked upon as *warnings*; and bespeak the necessity of watchfulness; they rouse a mutual zeal for God, a compassion towards our fellow-creatures; and prompt each one to do their best, by instruction, admonition, and an exemplary conduct, for the revival of religion, and for the reformation and happiness of the world.

To add no more particulars under this head: Religious conversation would peculiarly contribute to the *building us up* in faith and holiness. We might establish one another in the principles of our holy religion, and mutually affect and warm one another's hearts with the consequences of them. The sense and experience of those whom we judge worthy of our esteem and affection, from the sweet converse we have had together, will go far to settle and establish our judgment of things, against the opinions that prevail in the world; their knowledge will enlighten us; we shall catch their spirit; we shall enjoy *their* pious reflections and wise observations, as well as our own; and *their*

SERM. views, ambition, hopes and prospects, will
 XV. greatly raise and ennoble *ours*. We have considerable proof of this, from what history assures us as to the primitive christians; who, though they *felt* the natural love of life, and consequently were not void of the fear of death, yet became superior to both; and went with great courage and cheerfulness to their several tortures, from the previous warming, animating, conversation which they had one with another. It inspired them with a spirit, resolution, and firmness greatly *beyond* what was *natural* to them; and enabled them not only to *face*, but to *pass through* the most shocking scenes, not only without trembling, but with joy. To this cause, viz. to the religious conversation they had one with another, their persecutors imputed this their courage and constancy; for which reason they often *separated* them, and would not admit them to be in the same dungeon together. By the same means *we* might be able to convince the world, and ourselves too, of the blessed effects and singular advantages of religion: it would do much to the removing that criminal *shame* and *fear*, which often suppresses a glorious and dutiful confession of Christ and his religion before men; and leads to sinful compliances; it would give heart and spirit to the well-wishers

wishers to religion; and enable them to despise SERM.
the sneers and scoffs of its enemies and op- XV,
posers. 

These are some of the advantages and benefits, arising from the admitting of religious subjects into our *ordinary* conversation; and in these ways would the *lips of the righteous*, when so employed, *feed*, that is, preserve, improve, and benefit, others as to their highest interest: eminently subserving their present safety; their real perfection; and final felicity.

And now I would bring all home to ourselves; and in what hath been said, and shall be further offered, I would look upon *myself* to be equally interested with you.

If the matter was considered in an impartial light, I persuade myself, that the general neglect of this great and beneficial duty (for so I think there is reason to call it) must expose every friend of religion chargeable with this neglect, to the condemnation of his own mind. But is it not a sad truth, that amongst those who profess religion, who express a regard to it by public attendances upon its institutions, and would be esteemed to believe its weighty doctrines; is it not a sad truth, I say, that amongst such there should be a manifest care to shut it out of their conversation? that when any thing of that kind is

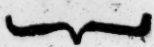
SERM. started, it should be presently suppressed and
 XV. banished; and any channel in the world cut
 out for discourse, any subject in the world admitted, preferred, however silly, trifling and childish, rather than that of religion? which is the perfection and distinction of our natures; the end of our beings; the noblest subject of our thoughts; the greatest concernment of our lives; and the best employment of our tongues. If it *is all this*, as may easily be demonstrated, and is actually *acknowledged* by those who have deliberately engaged in it, hath it not a *claim* to a considerable share of our conversation? Is there any reason for a shyness and wariness, least it should enter; or for our treating it as a vice, or a reflection on our character, by our being ashamed that it should appear abroad, or afraid that any regards thereto should break forth from our lips? Can we have any *inward* regard or love to it, whilst *these* are our sentiments of it, or behaviour towards it? do we not cast the highest reflection upon it thereby? and join issue with the representation that its very worst enemies would give of it? surely it is not *fit* to be *professed*, if it is *reproachful* to *discourse* upon it: nay doth not every argument for the profession, practice, and maintenance of it in the world, equally serve for its having a share as the subject

ject of conversation? Sure I am, there is no- SERM.
XV.
thing would more contribute to the securing
all these ends. }

It is observable, that this is the very means that Moses prescribes to the Jews for the preservation of religion in their hearts and houses, Deut. vi. 6, 7. "These words, saith he, that I command thee this day," meaning the truths and laws of God, "shall be in thy heart," or be uppermost with them, for the frequent employment of their thoughts: "and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way," either for diversion or conversation; "when thou liest down and when thou risest up." The general meaning is, that they were to take all occasions to discourse with those about them, upon divine things. This self-same thing is plainly enjoined us in those exhortations of the gospel: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works," Heb. x. 24. 1 Thess. iv. 18. "Comfort or exhort one another with *these words*:" that is, with those animating truths which he had just before mentioned. So in chap. v. 11. "Comfort yourselves *together*, and edify *one another*." Now in what other way could this be done, but by making those things the subjects of conversation? by discoursing upon them, he assures them of
mutual

SERM. mutual benefit ; and at the same time plainly
 XV. enjoins it as a duty. If it be so, whatever
 { cavils or pretences may be brought by any,
 in *excuse* for the customary omission of it, I
 will venture to say, nothing can be brought
 against it that hath reason, or the weight of an
 argument. Let us but be consistent with our-
 selves : let but our lives agree with our lips ;
 let but our general behaviour correspond with
 our occasional converse, and we need not be
 shy or reserved for fear of being thought hy-
 pocrites : but may speak with freedom, and
 gracefulness too of that, which our uniform
 conduct declares is our choice, our entertain-
 ment, and real character.

I am sorry to say it, but it is so general and
 sad a truth as loudly to call for an animadver-
 sion ; that if any subject of a moral or a reli-
 gious nature is started in conversation, the
 company, called sober and good, *seem struck*
 thereupon with amazement, as the modest
 would be with ribaldry, or the pious with pro-
 phaneness. The person suggesting an *useful*
 thought, is left to prosecute it *by himself* ; the
 conversation stagnates, however freely it cir-
 culated *before* ; till some kind tongue relieves
 it by inventing and throwing out something
 that is low, light, impertinent, or not worth
 the hearing. Great pity it is, that so many
 hours

hours as conversation engrosses, exclusive of SERM.
what respects business, and our civil concerns, XV.
should be rendered a meer blank or blemish, 
by creatures with *our* capacities and concerns ;
that they should be wholly filled up with what
rises no higher than the prattle of children,
and the displays of drollery and buffoonry ; or
prostituted to the dissecting of our neighbours
or friends character by backbiting, slander,
and detraction. In either of *these* ways, con-
versation is a criminal deduction from life, or
a scandalous debasement of speech.

Some direct and weighty motives might be
urged for *such* a conversing as the text recom-
mends, additional to those I have occasionally
hinted at. Namely,

That our own *personal* religion is greatly
subserved by this. The lips of the righteous
feed *themselves*, whilst they are feeding *others*.
The discoursing on such subjects, and exchang-
ing thoughts upon them, is the opening them ;
the bringing them to the light ; the setting
them to view ; whereby their reasonableness,
truth, strength, and amiableness is discerned,
and *felt* too by the mind ; which hath a direct
tendency to establish the resolution of adher-
ing to them ; and to derive an entertainment
and pleasure from them.

Hereby

SERM. Hereby also the instinctive inclination we
 XV. have to society, and the faculty of speech
 which qualifies us for it, are applied to one of
 the *primary* uses for which they were intended
 by our great former; even, to the improve-
 ment and benefit of others, in what is their,
 as well as our, chief concern and interest.

It would also be the saving and rescuing
 of many parcels of time, amounting to a con-
 siderable portion on the whole; which *at the*
best are now *lost*; and would render the *reflec-*
tion on our conversation agreeable, which too
 often at present will not bear it.

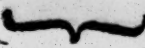
To hint at one further motive to a religious
 and useful conversation. Such subjects will
 be *chosen* and *preferred* as death draws near;
 unless, through our banishing them *till then*
 from our minds, we have rendered them ter-
 rifying: but even their occurring *then* to the
 mind *involuntarily*, or the *encouraging* such
 conversation at *that* season, with those who
 are about them, strongly evidences the impor-
 tance of the subjects; and the wisdom of em-
 ploying more of life and conversation upon
 them, *at present*.

There is one thing, which I think if con-
 sidered, would contribute greatly to what I am
 recommending; on which I will enlarge; and
 with which I will conclude. There is no dis-
 position

position of mind more natural to true christians, no light in which they more habitually consider themselves, than that of strangers and sojourners in this world, and in this body; whereby as the Apostle expresses it, they *seek another* country, that is, an heavenly one; where their *chief*, and comparatively the *whole*, of their concerns lie, and where their *home* is. Life is but a journey to all: we are all bound, not to *another place* in this world, but actually to an *exchange of worlds*; either of happiness or misery, where our state will admit of no alteration, where our abode will be everlasting. Now are christians *expectants* of immortal glory and honour? of such a rapturous exchange as that of earth for heaven, which the gospel describes? doth every day bring them nearer thereto? Is it not then very strange, that they should, as it were, travel many years *together* on a journey of such consequence, and as pilgrims too, in an unsettled and changing condition, where many difficulties rise in their way, where many dangers beset their paths, and where each one hears his own grievances in others complaints—Is it not strange I say, that under these circumstances, they should *never*, or *very rarely*, start any thing in their converse with one another, respecting their *own* country? If those of the
same

SERM.
XV.

SERM. same city *occasionally* meet in a *foreign* land,

XV. though they never were acquainted before,  how naturally do they make their home the *chosen* subject of their conversation? They will not suffer one another to forget it. How naturally, even when mixed with others, will they abstract themselves for converse in their own way, and on subjects on which their hearts and hopes are chiefly set, and on that country particularly to which they have the strongest attachment? But oh! how often is this *reversed*, amongst those who professedly look on themselves as strangers and sojourners in this world, and *avow* the hope and expectation of another! How often do they meet together, and *not one word* dropped, whereby it can be *perceived*, that they have any connection with another state, or any thought and interest beyond the present! I would appeal to all who have any sense of right and wrong, of consistency and inconsistency, is *this* right, or consistent behaviour? Or is it not a just impeachment of our belief of a future heaven, or of any lot or portion, we have therein?

I wish what hath been said might avail, to the rectifying this conduct amongst those, who wear the name of christians at present, and would be crowned as such at last. Let our conversation with one another, favour more of religion:

religion : that we may converse more in cha- SERM.
 racter even like those who have an heaven in XV.
 hope and expectation, which we *profess* to
 have. By this means our journey through life
 would be much more safe and comfortable;
 we should encourage one anothers hearts;
 strengthen one anothers hands ; help one an-
 other forward in our way ; and might at pre-
 sent enjoy one of the liveliest sensations of that
 pleasure, which will result from that affociation
 and communion, which we are expecting with
 the spirits of the just made perfect above.



...that we may have more in our hands.



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S E R M O N XVI.



Improvement of L I F E.



P S A L M XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our days, that we may
apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

T H E R E is nothing that hath a more SERM.
natural and universal influence upon the XVI.
happiness of mankind, than a just *estimate* of
human life, and an habitual attention to it :
nor is there any thing more easily attained upon
the exercise of that reflection and thought,
which is employed and *wasted* upon subjects
infinitely inferior thereto. Amidst all the dif-
VOL. II. D d agreeables

SERM. agreeables which attend the loss of paradise,

XVI. we may assure ourselves from the essential benevolence of that being, who placed us in this world, and from the munificence and bounty of his providence, towards us in this pilgrimage, that *he intended life as a considerable blessing*. It is true indeed, we meet with passages in scripture, as well as in conversation, representing it as an *undesirable* thing; or a favour hardly worth accepting; and which persons would be glad to throw up if they could. And from *such* persons too in scripture, as would lead one to think it was the voice of reason and piety too: such as Solomon, Job, and Jeremiah. But if we observe we shall find, either that those persons are describing life, as it is rendered by too many, viz. as a round of mean and animal actions; a nauseous tiresome circle of impertinence and trifling; whereby it may well become burthensome; and those who thus employ it, become heartily sick both of *that* and *themselves*. But is it not unreasonable to estimate any thing by the *abuse* of it? Or, these complainants speak the language of their own *passions* and *discontents*, under some pressing distress; whereby they are *transported* and *thrown* out of the exercise of their reason. But what judgment can we form of any thing from the representation

tion of the *passions*? Indeed, reason and good-
 nefs too may act becoming themselves in giv-
 ing it as their most deliberate judgment, that
 this life is contemptible if *detached* from its
 connection with another; or when weighed
 in the balance against that *more perfect* one be-
 fore them. But, though the present state
 may, by *abuse* and *misapplication*, become an
 empty and wearisome thing; a *very* vanity,
 or a scene of *prevailing* misery; and though
 the life that now is, is but an *infancy* of be-
 ing, in respect of enjoyment, compared with
 that which we expect; yet from what it *may*
 be *rendered*, and what it *may secure*, it really
 is an inestimable blessing. But instead of
 proving this *in form*, I would endeavour, as
 the text leads me, to help you to prove it each
 one to yourselves.

The title of this Psalm tells us, that the
 author of it was Moses, *the man*, or the Pro-
 phet, of God. He is here contemplating the
 frailty and shortness of life, as God for the
 sins of men had reduced it: intermixing de-
 vout acknowledgments of him, and ejacula-
 tions towards him, suitable to the nature of
 the subject. The text is a solemn address to
 God in order to the *practical* improvement of
 so affecting a truth. The request itself, and
 the disposition accompanying it, is most suitable

SERM. to us : who, though we may not have any
 XVI. immediate prospect of death, have yet no security for life. We are frail in our natures; subject to many unforeseen arrests; we share the reduction of life to this scantling measure; and it is vast odds against us that we never arrive at the term allotted.

The import of the Psalmist's prayer in general is, " That he and others might have
 " that affecting habitual sense of the determined shortness and uncertainty of life, as to
 " be led thereby religiously to employ it in
 " the best manner; and to apply it to the
 " purposes for which wisdom and happiness
 " demands it." From hence we are directed to consider,

I. The subject-matter of the Psalmist's prayer. Which is, That he and others might be engaged to employ life in that manner, and to apply it to those uses and ends for which wisdom and happiness demanded it; or by which the one was most truly manifested, and the other most certainly attained.

II. The means which he here proposes in order to this end; which is, That he might be taught to number his days.

I. Then; let us attend to the *subject-matter* of the Psalmist's prayer; which is, That he and others might be engaged to employ life

life in that manner, and to apply it to those SERM.
uses and ends, for which wisdom and hap- XVI.
piness demanded it ; or by which the one was
most truly manifested, and the other most
certainly attained.

Here I am led to enquire what application and employment of life that is, which merits the title and character of wisdom.

Now the wisdom here mentioned is plainly of the *practical* kind ; and as it respects human life, I think it may in general be thus described : “ Such an employment of the
“ powers our Maker hath given us, and such
“ an improvement of the circumstances in
“ which he hath placed us, as answers to his
“ *main* design ; and is the making the *most*
“ of those advantages for our own highest
“ benefit.”

It is observable and *demonstrable* too, that these two things stand in the closest connection ; or that what is most agreeable to God’s design, is most conducive to our benefit.
“ Truly to live, is truly to enjoy.” Most affect the character of being wise, but will by no means be at the pains of becoming *really* so. Instead of that, they satisfy themselves to be wise in *their own way*, and in their *own eyes* : as if fancy, fashion, or opinion, however derived, were the standard of true and false,

SERM. right and wrong : which is the absolute con-
XVI. founding both of things and language : and
the making *every* thing in its turn, nay at the
same time, both true and false, wise and
foolish. I must affirm there is a much better
standard than *they* are ; and consequently that
what doth not come up to *that*, though it hath
the sanction of all the others with it, cannot put
in for the title of wisdom.

Now when the Psalmist is speaking of it
respecting *human life*, what rule can be pro-
posed whereby to determine and fix our sen-
timents of it but this ? viz. “ The suitableness
“ of our spending life to the design of the
“ all-wise donor ; to the nature of the Being
“ whose life it is ; and in the extracting the
“ blessings and advantages of those circum-
“ stances in which our benevolent Former
“ hath placed us ? ” If we go by *this* stan-
dard, we see there is a wrong as well as a
right ; there is folly as well as wisdom ; and
the one can never be the other, let fancy and
opinion, mode and custom, work and prevail
as they will. This directs us to a method of
proceeding on this subject ; viz.

To specify some of the too general and
customary ways of spending life, which by
this standard are evidently branded and con-
demned.

And

And then to mention some of those uses SERM.
and purposes, which when life is principally XVI.
applied to, render it the truest life and the
highest wisdom—I would then

First. Specify some of the too general ways of
spending our successive days and years, which
are evidently condemned for folly and guilt,
by the standard which I have proposed.

Now the wise improvement of life, or that
which God and reason demands from us, stands
in opposition to these three things—To a
slothful waste of it—To a devoting and melt-
ing it down in things merely *innocent*—and
to the limiting and confining our views to too
scanty a period.

1. The wise and right employment of life
stands in direct opposition to a *slothful*, yea as
such, to a *sinful*, waste of it.

Human life carries action in its very sound
and notion. It is not merely to exist: but it
is to employ our time in something wherein
the powers of the mind, acting by the bo-
dy, are exerted. It is not to be measured by
the number of days or years which we have seen;
nor the breaths which we have drawn; nor
the meals which we have repeated; but from
the work we have done; from the part we
have acted in the creation of God; from the
figure we have bore in the station wherein
providence hath fixed us; from the use of the

SERM. talents and abilities with which our Maker has
XVI. endowed us. All will allow that there may
be a round of actions, that comparatively
amount upon the whole to no more than absolute idleness: there may be a succession of employments of no real significance; which merit the character of a laborious doing of nothing; and are the actual *waste* of life. Such theirs is, whose days are successively filled up with and divided, between dressing and undressing, indulgencies and dozings, going out and coming in. Such is *theirs*, who live only for the sake of living; whose whole concern is engrossed, by the *meer* preservation of life; whose whole business it is to spin it out as long as they can: *not* for the sake of the work which the great Lord and proprietor hath cut out for them to do in it, or the making the more sure of that glorious recompence at the end, which is a justifiable, yea, a religious view: but *meerly* from a fondness for a bodily life, an attachment to this world; from a disbelief, a contempt, or a dread of living out of the body. Such also are wasters of life, who are dreaming away their time in vain musings, roving imaginations; of which if enquiry was made at the time, they could give very little account. Their heads are stuffed with extravagant fancies; crowded with
fantastick

fantastick images. They leave their minds SERM. to run adrift with every start of thought; XVI. they give entertainment to every thing that will enter, however senseless, frothy, or foolish; these are singly harboured and pondered, till something of the same kind thrusts out the former. By this means nothing worth a thought can be attended to; it has no opportunity for entering; nor is there a disposition in the mind to give it so much as a reception.

What a *waste* of life is it, when devoted to the contriving methods for the passing time away? for the *speeding* its flight? and *hastening* the several portions of it to a period? which through the rust of the faculties, or the alienating the powers of the mind to the drudgery of sin, they know not how to *employ*, or how to *bear*. For when time is a burden, it is one of the greatest. With how many are the *greatest* number of the hours wherein they are awake, melted down in employments, which nothing but childhood can excuse? in a conversation made up, when most innocent, only of a few game phrases? and all ideas are in danger of being blotted out or excluded, which have any tendency to the pursuit of wisdom, or the relishing any thing reasonable or religious?

SERM. A caution is no charge : as a *caution* this
 XVI. representation is intended, and as a very se-
 { rious one too. For surely, human life thus
 spent is absolutely thrown away. It is then a
 very *dream* ; and whatever exercise of mind
 or body there may be, it is but *meer duration* :
 and *that* there is as truly when we are fast
asleep.

But it were *comparatively* well, if such a
 waste of existence was only the *loss of time* :
 though that will one day be found a sufficient
 cause for bitter self-reproach. But alas ! it is
 also the *ruin of the mind*. The finest parts and
 capacities thereby wither away. The *tone* of
 the affections, if I may so express myself, is
 spoiled ; infomuch that the *mind*, which is the
 man, becomes incapable of *relishing* any
 thing above sport, play, and trifling. Such a
 wasteful trifling way of life, is naturally at-
 tended with a perpetual restlessness of mind ;
 a wearisome disgust of themselves, and all
 about them ; and, in respect of eternity, will
 have the same consequences with an habit of
 vice.

When one sees a fellow-creature consuming
 its existence so ingloriously, in such childish
 accidents and employments, for which the
 very instinct and sagacity of the animal would
 be almost sufficient, one that hath any sense
 of

of the dignity of human nature, and the worth of human life, cannot forbear bewailing it in the language of pity. “ Is this the creature on whom its Maker hath bestowed reason, and whom he hath designed for immortality ! Whom he hath ennobled and raised above the brutal world, and generously qualified for services and enjoyments vastly surpassing theirs ! Is this the creature at whose production its bounteous Author said, *Let us make him after our own image ;* and on whom, with the sole view to his happiness, he hath contrived to reinstamp that image, when defaced ! Is this the mind furnished for the contemplation of the most sublime objects ! for the making devout reflections on the surrounding works of God ! for looking into futurity, conversing with eternity, and looking through all the veil of created things, to the great, the governing cause ! was it a reasonable soul that was breathed into this human body ! alas ! how is it sunk and degenerated ! how is it lost to all sense of its Maker and itself ; of its original, capacities, and end ! Can it have any relation to an *eternal* life, when it hath lost its very relishes for every thing truly great and good *in this !*” Oh what can a life delivered up to the disposal of fancy, frolick,

SERM.
XVI.

SERM. frolick, and meer amusement, terminate in!
 XVI. when God hath made nothing to be idle and
 uselefs, what must man, his *distinguished* creature below, expect from him, who shall by studied artifices whirl away his years and life, when by one serious reflection he might satisfy himself, that he was defeating his Creator's design?

2. The wise employment of human life stands opposed to the spending an *undue proportion* of our time and pains in things which, when *in their place*, are consistent with its chief design and end.

There are several things in which mankind engage, *in their nature* innocent and laudable too, which may justly expose them to the charge of folly and guilt, from the *manner* and *measure* of their prosecution.

The improvement of the understanding in knowledge is highly commendable; and that not only in a person's *particular* business, but in a more general way. There are some subjects indeed *so uselefs*, as that nothing can confer a grain of worth upon them: and the time that is spent in them is as absolutely thrown away, as it can be in any other instance: or as an heathen expresses it, "to converse there-
 " with is but putting so many silly riddles to
 " ourselves."

“ ourselves.” * There are other subjects of SERM. knowledge, the pursuit of which manifests XVI. our wisdom, and makes us wise ; instructing  us in our duty ; pointing out to us our interest and happiness, and the direct means to secure them. By the knowledge of *these* things we can *only* become wise. But it is a very mistaken application of life, when a meer acquaintance with *these means* terminates our endeavours and views, whilst we overlook the *end* they are to subserve, even the *securing* that interest and happiness, and the *discharging* those duties, to which our knowledge would lead us. Wisdom lies not in the speculation of things, but in the modelling of our behaviour by them : and the knowledge even of the most important subjects, is but as the *blossom* of the tree, whilst religion and virtue are the *fruit*. And therefore, if our lives are spent in speculation only for self-amusement ; if we seek knowledge only for accomplishment and conversation, it is but a more reputable way of wasting life. For us, who have a very important work *to do* ; *for us*, I say, to spend our years *meerly* in quest of knowledge, is as if a man, who was to go a journey, should content himself with enquiring about his way, without taking a step in it.

* Seneca.

Again :

SERM. Again: Persons engaged in their *lawful callings* may be as truly in the way of their duty, as they are in acts more immediately religious; and at *some* times they are *more* so, when engaged in the former, than they would be were they engaged in the latter. But still, if we are related to a future, everlasting state, in the design of our Maker, life can never be *principally*, much less *wholly*, intended for *secular* affairs; nor can it be *thus* devoted and applied, without great folly and great guilt too. There is no *inconsistency* between the lower, and higher uses of life. We may be wise for this world and for another too. But our care ought to be very diligently exercised, that the one doth not usurp the other's claims, and supplant it. Since we have an infinitely more important concern and interest to mind and make, than this vanishing world can ever plead; *then only* is the prosecution of our secular affairs wise and innocent, when the *ultimate* end of life is so far kept in our view, as to regulate and direct our measures of acting for this world, so as to preserve a due proportion of time, and a regard for a better.

By the same rule are we to proceed as to *diversions* and *recreations*: which from the very terms are to be distinguished from the *business* of life. To be *always* engaged therein,

is

is consequently *never* to attend to what is of SERM.
any moment or worth. Our present state calls XVI.
for amusements and relaxations of mind: reli-
gion therefore cannot forbid them. But what
a foolish and criminal waste of life is it, to
devote it to them? It is a strong symptom of a
very unfurnished head, or of a very bad fur-
nished heart, when they are pursued for the
sake of passing away of time; or when made
the *end* of life. For, I can by no means
think, that a reasonable creature is to be justi-
fied in being *wholly* engaged in things, that are
meerly innocent. Nor can I conceive how a
creature designed for *immortality* can answer,
or comport with that character, or ever come
to rejoice in it, who is wholly devoted to em-
ployments, of which the *best* that can be said
is, that they have *no hurt* in *them*. I am sure,
however innocent they may be in *themselves*,
or when they are kept in their place, yet they
are both hurtful and criminal when they are
become the *chief* objects of the mind and
heart. Surely, the engagements of such ought
to carry in them a proportion of relation and
tendency to the *whole* design, the *chief* end of
their being: which can only be done, by what
hath an intrinsic goodness; by what can ad-
vance the soul in its proper perfection; and
qualify it for its ultimate bliss.

3, The

SERM. 3. The wise employment of human life
 XVI. stands opposed to the limiting and confining
 our views to a too scanty period.

It is one of our distinguishing faculties that we can look into *futurity*; and can at present provide for a very *distant* event. This is a very convincing intimation *to me*, that *we* are more concerned with futurity than the beings below us, who seem wholly destitute of this quality. Our lives are in a great measure spent in laying schemes for *hereafter*; and anticipating future events which only respect *this* part of our existence, or are to take place on this side the grave: whilst they extend not as they *might* to the everlasting division of it, or to that which is *beyond death*. Our folly and fault herein, is not so much that we interest ourselves in things out of our province, or exercise an undue solicitude about future events *in life*, which are secrets to us, and belong to the Lord our God; though *that* is forbidden us: but our folly *chiefly* lies in *this*, that whilst we *can* extend our views to, and be influenced by distant *prospects*, yet we *confine* our eye to the uncertain futurities of this momentary life, and look not *beyond* those, to a future happiness and misery, infallibly certain, and transcendently interesting. For *this* we are equally capacitated; and in order to our conversing with and realizing
these

these futurities, was the natural faculty principally bestowed upon us. SERM.
XVI.

Thus I have represented some of the too fashionable and prevailing ways of spending life, which stand opposed to the wise and true employment of it, which from plausible appearances, and the countenance of numbers, are apt to engross our successive years to themselves; and alienate them from the highest purposes and ends, they are granted to subserve.

As for *gross sensuality* the expression is much *too mild* to say, that the days and years spent in that manner *are lost*: they can never be *calmly* reviewed, but with *indignation* and *shame*. These call for no small share of after time to *tread back*, as it were, the way we have gone, and to *undo* what we have done. Every one who hath *senses*, not to say reason, must see, that it is a lingring, manifold, *death*. It is the destruction of every advantage God hath bestowed upon us; it is the defeating of every *rational* and *moral* end of life; it is the bane of all *real* enjoyment of it; and the converting the noblest endowments of our nature, reason, conscience, and immortality, into instruments of pain and misery; into stings and curses. Such may as easily satisfy themselves of their

SERM. abuse of life, as they may of their being men,
XVI. and not brutes.

I should now specify some of those ends, which when life is duely applied, render it the truest life, and the highest wisdom. But I shall conclude at present with three inferences, which I think naturally follow from what has been said.

Inf. 1. How great is the necessity and advantage of making frequent pauses and reviews in life! seriously to look over it, and to enquire to what uses and employments it hath been put.

Ah! how many of the days of our pilgrimage are unnumbered! or how many, one after another, slide away unnoticed and unimproved! the reason hereof is this shameful one, that there is nothing, which we more generally agree to esteem a *trifle*; and as such to throw it away, as *our time*; though there is nothing we possess which equally deserves the title of *important*; since we have all the evidence we can desire, that it hath an influence upon a *future eternity* to that degree, as to model its *nature* and *kind* in respect of happiness or misery. It is a great instance of wisdom to converse with our *past* days and years; and to know what *report they* make to heaven and ourselves. The time we *have spent* though
gone

gone is by no means to be looked on as what SERM.
hath never been. But as it was delivered out to XVI.
 us for very valuable purposes, the *application* }
 of it, is what we are accountable for; and
 consequently it should be reviewed and re-
 membered by us. If we did seriously exercise
 reflection, our errors might soon be discerned;
 and we might derive an advantage from them,
 even by rendering *future* life more satisfactory
 to ourselves. If we live *without* reflection, there
 are no errors, no habits, but may take place;
 and we ourselves may be very guilty of what
 we condemn as most reproachful in others;
 whilst we neither reprove ourselves, nor admit
 the salutary censure of a friend. We generally
 stand in need of *admonition*; and admonitions
 from *our own consciences*, obtained by serious
 reflection, would have a *peculiar* effect. What
 need have we then frequently to summon our
 thoughts for *our own use*? applying them to a
 general review of the *manner* of spending our
 returning days and years, and of the *division*
 of our time, in respect of the widely different
 interests and issues which we have to regard.
 “ What, O my soul, have I been doing with my
 “ life and time? to what uses have I applied
 “ them? have I consulted my *whole*, my *better*,
 “ self, therein? have they *corresponded* to my
 “ capacities; to the intentions of my all-wise

SERM. " former ; and my relation to eternity ? Have
 XVI. " not things merely *innocent*, *usurped* upon
 " that proportion that was due to those which
 " were *indispensibly necessary* ? Hath not this
 " body and this world robbed my better part
 " of a great share of that time, care, and af-
 " fection, to which it hath a claim *by order*
 " from its divine parent ? whereby its prospects
 " beyond the grave have been sadly darkened,
 " and its interest and happiness greatly hazard-
 " ed : whilst at the same time my own mind,
 " had I appealed to it, would have convicted
 " me of the folly, and have reproached me
 " for the misapplication and injury." Such
 self converse would give us a just view of our-
 selves ; and a just estimate of life, from what
 we have to do in it, and what we are ordained
 to reap from it, as improved or wasted. This
 would prevent the squandering away of our pre-
 cious time, which is the most destructive ex-
 travagance ; and our running headlong and
 blindfold after others into the most *childish*
 amusements, as we too often do, without dis-
 cerning the scandal, and the crime ; till we
 forget *what* we are ; *where* in a little time we
 shall be ; *what* we *have been* doing ; and *what*
ought to have been done. None of the nu-
 merous ways of murdering time and life,
 however now justified and persisted in, can
 bear

bear a calm and impartial reflection. And SERM. whence this! but because they have not our XVI. reason and conscience on their side. And can any thing be more *confessedly* faulty than what will *not bear this*? The use of reason is to act reasonably; and whatever is *consistent* with that principle, will stand the test of it. There cannot therefore be a more certain evidence of the crime and folly of an act, than for the *mind itself*, upon a full hearing, to bring in such a verdict *against* it. Such ways of life are taken up through inconsideration; and they are absolutely maintained through want of reflection.

2. From what hath been said we may see, whence a great part of the painful vanity and tediousness of human life proceeds.

Man is a poor complaining creature. Sometimes the grief is, that life is so *short*, that it is a meer delusion; at other times it is so *empty* and *wearisome*, that it is not worth receiving. But who may we thank for a great deal of this? Is it not owing to *ourselves*? Do not *we* make it shorter much, than it was intended to be, by hurrying it over, and employing art to speed its flight, and to hasten its period, before we have lived half our days? Do we not render it nauseous and tiresome, by employing it in fooleries and childish entertainments, that can

SERM. yield no satisfaction to the man within us,
 XVI. either at the time, or in the reflection? or in
 what is succeeded by pain and suffering? It
 would fill a thinking person's breast with con-
 tempt and indignation, to hear a creature talk
 of the *shortness* of life, who can shuffle away
 seven or eight hours of every day or night
 upon the stretch! Can one feel any other re-
 sentment to hear others complaining of it as
empty and *tiresome*, who apply it to no pur-
 pose, that will yield a rational pleasure, or a
 satisfactory review; who destroy their bodily
 constitution in chace of animal gratifications,
 and from *choice* become drudges to as many
 masters, as they have lusts, or to those that
 tyrant custom shall set over them? Such an
 employment of it, may well reduce what
 merits the name of *life* to a very scanty mea-
 sure; and our *enjoyment* of it to a very narrow
 limit. No wonder so many are ready to fling
 it up as *satiated* and *weary*, was it not for the
 apprehension of something much worse *after-*
wards: but *this* is wholly to be put to the
 account of our *own folly*. Our good God in-
 tended our present existence, to promote our
 happiness *here* as well as hereafter: and did
 we but lay out our days and years as he hath
 directed, and fill them up as reason and wis-
 dom would prescribe, life would be found a
favour,

favour, as it was *intended* to be; to yield a SERM.
XVI.
 relish which the abusers of it can never know; and it would be ranked amongst our *first* blessings, with all its shortness, uncertainty, and mixture.

3. We may learn from whence the fear of death in a great measure arises: it is from the waste and misapplication of life.

We doze or fool it away; we drudge or sport it away. Sense, imagination, appetite, and mode, are called in to dispose of it. The employments of it are rather amusements, diversions, or inventions *to help us off* with it, than *improvements* of it. What wonder then, that we are unable to face death? the view of which will give us a just estimate of the worth and importance of life; and when the mind hereupon will so readily bring an indictment for the wasting and embezzling an invaluable blessing of providence: for no one will require proof that it *merits* a condemnation, when he comes to leave the world.

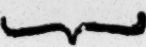
If we have a thirst after knowledge and truth, which in *itself* is a noble cast of mind, let us at the same time remember, *that* is but laying a foundation, whilst there is a superstructure of devotion and virtue to be raised upon it; by which life is chiefly now to be judged as improved, and from whence it will

SERM. principally redound to our advantage hereafter.

XVI. Let us *practice* as we go on; and not think it enough to speculate. The furniture of the understanding, will not supply the want of good affections and a religious disposition. It is from what faith and love have settled and inspired, from whence we must derive our chief supports when dying; *they* must dispose the soul for its proper enjoyments after death.

Though our secular affairs require diligence, and this attention to them is commendable; yet let us remember the approaches of death are to be sustained, and the mind to be reconciled to the awful event, *not* by what we have amassed together *in this world*, but entirely by the application of life to the laying up for ourselves a *treasure in another*.

It is no wonder to see those tremble at the thoughts or in the approach of death, whose minds have been rusting in sloth, who have consumed their existence in pleasure; whose employment of their indulged time hath been wholly devoted to the making of *this world*; or one successive diversion *from* their *chief* concern. The prodigal lavishing, and senseless follies of an heedless life, cannot but infuse a bitterness and horror into the prospect of its period. The time of death is usually a time of reflection; and of such a *kind* too, as few
who

who have known *most* of it before have been SERM. acquainted with. But what must *theirs* be, XVI. whose *first* reflections are under *that prospect*?  what must *dying* be to *them*, whose consciences tell them, that they have *never lived*? If we are at a loss to estimate our successive years, or have them in contempt, ask those on dying beds; *they* can inform us: *they* will correct our wretched mistakes. This is certain: the wiser improvement we have made of our days, the less ground there is to fear their period; and the less terror there generally is at the approaches of it.

To sum up all: Time is but squandered and lost, if it is not applied and employed as a preparation for eternity. A loss it is, for which we have none to blame but ourselves; a loss it is, which no cares and thoughtfulness about our secular affairs can *excuse*; which no enticements, examples, or modes can *justify*; and which the gain of the whole world can never *make up*; since the loss of our time, will infallibly be followed by the loss of our souls.





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SERMON XVII.



On the same SUBJECT.



PSALM XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our days, that we may
apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

THE Psalmist is here engaged in a serious contemplation on the frailty and shortness of human life, as God for the sins of men, hath reduced it: intermixing devout acknowledgments of him, and devout ejaculations towards him, suitable to the nature of the striking subject. The general import of the petition in the text, I told you, was this, SERM.
XVII.

“ that

SERM. " that he and others might have that affecting
 XVII. " sense of the determined contraction of hu-
 " man life, as might engage their sollicitude
 " to the employing it in the best and wisest
 " manner."

I have proposed to enquire, What application of life that is which merits the stile and character of wisdom. And, since ceasing to act foolishly is the *first* step to our acting wisely, I have specified some of the too general methods of spending our days and years; which are condemned by every standard of wisdom that reason can pronounce such, or which the nature of things, or the word of God, suggest to us. Such methods are; A slothful waste of life—A giving up ourselves to, or suffering our minds to be wholly engrossed by, things in their own nature *innocent*—or, A limiting and confining our views and ends to too scanty a period. These I have enlarged upon: and I hope have shewn to your conviction that these things by no means come up to that application of our lives, for which they were originally granted; and are, purely by the will and pleasure of the great donor, continued to us.

I now proceed to enquire; What that laying out or employment of life is, which
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truly merits the title and character of wisdom. SERM.
XVII.

This I have in general thus defined, “ Such
“ an application of the powers which our Maker
“ hath given us, and such an improvement of
“ the circumstances in which he hath placed
“ us, as answers his *chief* design ; and is the
“ making the most of those advantages for
“ the subserving our highest benefit.”

Knowledge and judgment are included in wisdom : but it is not every kind of knowledge that constitutes us wise ; but the knowledge of those things, which are of the greatest importance, and most immediately at the foundation of our own happiness. Judgment is also essential to the character of wisdom : but more especially the forming a right one, with respect to things in which our felicity is most immediately concerned. But neither the most perfect knowledge of those things, nor the justest estimate of them, will denominate us wise, without a conduct answerable thereto. The former doth but aggravate our folly, unless our *practical* choice and prosecution of those things be governed by our knowledge and judgment of their worth and value. I apprehend this will be allowed by all. And if it is attended to, it will assist us in discern-
ing

SERM. ing, to what uses and purposes life ought prin-
 XVII. cipally to be applied, in order to render it the
 truest life; and to manifest the highest wisdom in us. As such I would mention the following. The perfecting the best part of our natures—Providing against the worst that can befall us—The laying in for our present and future satisfaction—And the securing our highest interest and noblest expectations. To begin.

I. The present life is wisely improved, when it is eminently applied to the perfecting the best part of our natures.

Though we allow a divine hand in every part of our frame, and though the bright conviction meets our eye, on whatever part of ourselves we turn it, that we are fearfully and wonderfully made; yet it is as evident, that there is a *less*, and a *more* noble part; a *meaner*, and a *more valuable* one, *originally* intended. Accordingly, they are *thus* to be estimated by us, from their very different powers; the ends they are each to subserve; and as our felicity is infinitely more affected by the state of the one, than of the other.

Proceeding by these rules, we must allow our *souls* to be by far our most valuable part; since

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since their capacities are vastly superior to the powers of the body, though exquisitely organized as ours are; since they are adapted to serve much nobler purposes; and as from *their* state, our happiness or misery results, unspeakably beyond what is found from any condition in which the body can be. Our *bodies* soon arrive at their perfection, which is succeeded by a decay, whatever art or care we exercise to prevent it: with our *souls* it is much otherwise. However they appear whilst *embodied*, however they may be affected in their operations *by the body*, yet *in themselves*, they are capacitated for still, still higher advances, than any they can possibly make in this life: and in proportion to their approaches to what is ultimate and final their happiness becomes more sensible.

Now since there is one part of our natures, that is so much *superior* in excellency to the other, wisdom demands the application of our days and years for the cultivating and improving of *that*, which from its worth and dignity, capacity, and duration, challenges our principal concern. If it be asked, wherein the perfection of the best part of our natures consists? I answer, principally in the furnishing and enlarging our understandings, and in the exalting of the affections. And to both these should life
be

SERM. be applied; or, there is no wisdom in the ap-
 XVII. plication of it—To speak a little to each of
 these.

Wisdom requires a proportionable degree of our time for the furnishing and enlarging of our understandings, in which all the excellency and glory of man is founded.

I am persuaded that the very great difference between one and another, in point of wisdom as it respects the understanding, is not so much owing to an *original* difference in the capacity, as to the different *application* of it. Truth is the proper object of the understanding: how must *theirs* be furnished then, who can be entertained by nothing but with romantick scenes, visionary images, sports of the imagination? At the very best, this is but *lumber*; and must as such be thrown away before we can have any *relish* for the knowledge that can make us wise. Hereby we live amidst waking dreams; and subject ourselves to the impressions and powers of delusions, till no *truth* that is worth a thought can find admission. • How must *their* understanding be contracted who, for a long succession of years, are conversant with low and little things, mean or sordid ideas, to those that are limited to their five senses? Is not this an abuse of time? and doing great injury to the faculty? Since hereby we become
strangers,

strangers, yea *averse*, to every object, which for worth and importance is *equal* to our own dignity. On the other hand, when the mind is inured to subjects which *fill*, and even are *too big* for it, the faculty itself is *enlarged*, as well as enriched; and becomes more capable of admitting, as well as of improving, them; from whence wisdom and happiness result. To instance;

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XVII.

How intertaining and improving is the contemplation of and converse with an invisible God, as represented to us in his works and word? How does it enlarge, as well as improve the mind, to cultivate the knowledge of him, as the great creator of the world; the universal sovereign and ruler; the maintainer and supporter of every class of beings; the unwearied benefactor, the constant inspector, the supreme judge of all; the former of our bodies; the original of our spirits; our owner, ruler and judge; our friend and father; and our ultimate good and felicity?

The same happy enlargement and improvement would our understandings find from an invisible world, as an invisible God. This our very reason suggests to our contemplation, as a truth accompanied with the highest probability. But it comes more strongly recommended, by what the author of our religion hath

SERM. testified and brought to light : who hath de-
 XVII. scribed it by the most endearing representa-
 tions; and in the particulars wherein it con-
 sists: such as in the vision of God; commu-
 nications from him; and a resemblance of
 him; from whence the blessedness of the
 creator is shared according to the capacity of
 the creature.

I have mentioned these as truths, whereby
 our understandings are singularly ennobled and
 improved: whilst the gospel of Jesus would
 furnish them with many more particulars,
 adapted to the same end. The advantage
 which the mind receives from conversing with
 truth, is ever in proportion to its certainty,
 importance, and sublimity. And what can
 compare with the truths of religion in these
 respects? from whence then, can the mind
 derive such an enlargement or grandeur, as it
 may from those? But

Further: the perfecting the best part of our
 nature consists in the refinement and exalting
 of the affections.

Our business in life lies very much with
 the passions, as they are set to good or evil, to
 this world or another. Let our attainments be
 what they will in respect of knowledge, there is
 little done in respect of the perfection and pro-
 sperity of the soul, till our *affections* are purified
 from

from sin and sense, *so far as* to have gained a *pre-* SERM.
vailing direction to nobler objects. I am sure XVII.
 we all find a call hereto; and that we shall have
 demands of this kind, for the employment of
 our time. Have we not some inclinations,
 actually criminal, to mortify? have we not
 some eager and importunate appetites, to curb?
 have we not desires towards lawful things to
 moderate and restrain, which have broke their
 bounds? Is there not great cause, and a loud
 call, to arrest and translate our affections from
 things below, to those above? from things
 that are mean and vain, to what are ennobling
 and substantial? from what is temporal, to
 what is eternal? There is nothing more evi-
 dences the perfection of the soul than the
 strength and vigor of devout and heavenly af-
 fections. There is therefore nothing to which
 life can be more wisely applied, than to the
 care of our better part, from the state of which
 we are *principally* happy or miserable.

2. This wisdom is also evidenced by pro-
 viding against the very worst than can befall
 us.

The evils of this life, our experience tells
 us, are very thick sown, and may very *unex-*
pectedly arise: so that was it not for an assurance
 of a divine providence, that can prevent them,
 measure them, or sustain us under them, our

SERM. very apprehensions might overwhelm our minds.

XVII. But of all the events which we may possibly or shall certainly see, there are two eminently distinguished for their awfulness : viz. “ the period “ of this life by death ; and the being by that introduced into an unchanging state of misery.” *Every other* evil to which mankind are incident, is nothing either in apprehension or reality *to these* : and from their awfulness they are liable to return upon the mind. What we *dread*, as well as what we desire, is *apt* to do so ; and the more so, by how much the greater the dread is.

From the natural love of life, designed for the preservation of it, there naturally results a *fear of death* : which though it may arise from several causes, yet is never so agonizing in its degree, as when it is apprehended as an introduction to the misery of another state. These are the most intense fears, to which human nature is liable ; and the most formidable evils to which mankind are exposed. The ending of this life by death we cannot but expect ; since it is the fixed decree of heaven that all shall once die. The *other* event we have ground to *fear*, since it is the fixed issue of a vitious course. The dread of death was implanted originally amongst other ends for *this*, viz. to lead us to a *preparation* for it : by which means,

means, though it be originally a punishment, it may now become unspeakably advantageous. A future state of woe is also revealed and assured; those to whom it shall be awarded are described, that by timely care it may be prevented; and as a merciful warning from heaven to keep us from coming into that place of torment. "Is there then, O my soul, any demand for thy zeal, attention, and the application of thy fleeting time, *equal* to what these events make? Is there any one, in all that variety of changes to which thou art subject, that is to be named with these in respect of a solicitous concern, and an awakening apprehension? Or can thy wisdom be equally manifest in any other issue that is now depending, comparable to what it would be in preparing for and providing against *these*?" The too general way of doing this both in respect of death, and the destruction following it, is, *by banishing the thought of them*. Being both of them looked on as *evil* days, we contrary to all our reasoning and proceeding in like cases, call in the help of *imagination* to set the one at a great distance; and seek the aid of infidelity to set the other at defiance. But Oh! what *provision* is hereby made against either! And it is very probable, that vain and ineffectual as these devices are, they cost more pains to sup-

SERM. port them, than a rational and religious pro-
 XVII. viding against them would cost. Though
 there is no exemption to be hoped for from death, yet, blessed be God, that king of terrors may be disarmed; and we may be unhurt of the *second* death. Rev. ii. 11. How can we more wisely apply our hearts to the improvement of the present life, than in the best manner we can, to provide against the *fear* of death, and the *stroke* of it too? that it be not accompanied with a fear of a destruction and misery after it. This may be done by making our peace with God through a timely repentance; by forsaking the practice of every sin, which continued in, gives a torturing sting to the first death, and a destructive power to the other. It may be done, by a disengagement from every vicious principle and favourite lust; setting ourselves every day to correct the *known* omissions and commissions of the last; and persevering herein by watchfulness, diligence and prayer, to the end of our lives. And since there is a dread of death wrought into our *very frame*, and is a kind of ingredient in our composition, as well as what arises from a *sense of guilt*; since we may be in bondage through this fear, even when we have no dread of any thing *beyond* death, how wise an application of our time is it, to endeavour the subduing this, and to fortify the mind
 against

against the enslaving power of this natural SERM.
 passion, by restraining our inclinations to- XVII.
 wards sensible delights; by taking heed against }
 the being overcharged with the cares of this
 world; by familiarizing death by frequent
 thoughts; by forming clear conceptions, and
 establishing the mind in the firm persuasion of
 the christian's hope, with the *security* we have
 for it? It is certain, however *natural* the fear
 of death may be, yet it *may* become rather the
 object of our *wish* than of our dread; were
 we more conversant with a future glorious im-
 mortality; were the dispositions and relishes of
 our souls more congenial, or more a-kin, to
 the enjoyments and employments of it; and
 did we by serious contemplation more frequent-
 ly draw aside the vail. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.
 Time thus applied, in making provision against
 the most formidable events we have to fear,
 even death, and the destruction that may suc-
 ceed it, is most wisely laid out, as our hap-
 piness both at present and in prospect is equally
 provided for.

3. Time and life are wisely improved, when
 applied to the laying in for our present and
 future satisfaction.

Every ones *experience*, as well as observa-
 tion, informs them, that our condition as to
 happiness, is in a manner wholly governed by
 the state of our minds. As we are body as

SERM. well as soul, and have a concern with this
 XVII. world as well as with another, so indeed our
 { happiness is liable to be affected by *outward*
 circumstances : but if the spirit of a man,
 through a resignation and trust in God, or
 even by a *natural* fortitude, can sustain his
 wants or losses of external good, there may be
 a self-enjoyment, far beyond what is found
 amidst the most flowing prosperity, if the *mind*
 is restless and disturbed. We are then in the
 most happy state, when *that* abounds most in
 peace, hope, and joy ; and *those* are the most
 solid and permanent of the kind, which result
 from the calm *reflection* on our own acts ; and
 the judgment which we pass upon them as good
 and acceptable in the sight of God. Since we
 have this power, it is impossible *wholly* to pre-
 vent its exercise, whatever arts we fly to for
 the suspending it, or stripping ourselves of it.
 What wiser maxim then can we lay down,
 for the direction and application of our life on
 earth than this ? “ To live in that manner, as
 “ to lay in for comfortable and refreshing re-
 “ flections.” Its true, some *seem* to be very
 well satisfied with themselves, whilst their be-
 haviour will not *bear* a thought : but what
 then ? every one must see the difference, and
 will sooner or later *feel* it, between a tranqui-
 lity that arises from the mind itself turning in-
 ward upon itself ; and one that proceeds from
 a suspension

a suspension of thought, and being absolute SERM.
strangers to ourselves. We have a register and XVII.
a judge in our own breast, which even anticipates a more perfect one. This indeed increases their satisfaction, whose consciences *approve* them upon an impartial review and survey; since from thence they can go much further in their conclusions, and say, That God, who knows more than their own hearts, approves them too. 1 John iii. 21. *Then* will our successive days and years, bring in an harvest of peace and pleasure from time to time, when we habitually take God for a witness of our ways and walk; and an ambition to stand right in his sight influences us, under every scene of action and engagement: when we make conscience, guided by the divine word, our monitor, and counsellor; steadily regarding its dictates, faithfully following its light, in opposition to inclination, common opinion, and custom, where they interfere therewith. When we are faithful to the degree of our talents; consulting the will of our great Lord in their use and application; and are satisfied with his approbation as our recompence. Life spent under the influence of *such* principles, views, and ends, cannot fail of yielding a satisfaction, far beyond what any condition or course can do, where *these* are wanting. Hereby, we may triumph in the years that are *past* ;
our

SERM. our *yesterdays* add considerably to the smiles and
 XVII. joys of the *present* day; and *time* throws a
 { cheering light upon the eternity, with which
 it is connected, and by which it is succeeded.
 This brings me to another particular.

4. Life is most wisely applied to the securing our highest interest and noblest expectations.

We have indisputably the testimony of reason, and the scheme of the gospel rests upon the truth, "That there is a state of glory and
 " felicity, infinitely surpassing every thing we
 " now know, or can at present conceive." This is promised to us upon certain terms, as a recompence and reward: from whence we are bid to indulge the expectation, and to interest ourselves therein. The account which he who came from heaven hath given us of its nature, assures us it calls for a certain disposition of mind on our parts, to qualify us for the enjoyment of it, as our proper felicity.

Can there then be a wiser application of our days and years, than to acquire what we must know if we desire to know, is indispensibly necessary for our admission to it, and enjoyment of it, and in the cultivating and improving the required qualifications? If a person is called to any considerable change of station and employment; or from a *private* circumstance

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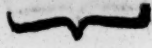
stance be advanced to a civil post in the king-^{SERM.} dom, common discretion will prompt him in **XVII.**

the best manner he can to fit himself for it ; that he may fill it, become equal to it, in order to receive the advantages of it. But what change of circumstances in this life, can even *resemble* what we are expecting, as candidates for immortal blessedness ! “ When a soul shall
“ be admitted into the divine presence ; to see
“ its maker face to face ; and to an immediate intercourse with an all-perfect being ;
“ to spend an eternity in receiving communications from him ; and in returning corresponding acts of homage, worship, and adoration ; when it shall be called up to join
“ the perfected spirits attending the throne ; to mingle praises and prostrations with theirs ;
“ to unite with them in employments and exercises requiring the utmost rectitude and vigour of faculties, and consisting in the most exalted acts, that our natures are capable of.”—What change of circumstances, I say, can be likened to this !—But *such* a change we are even *hoping* for, if we know what our christian, our heavenly hope is.

And doth not the very mention of the thing bespeak *peculiar* qualifications, as requisite to answer and relish such an expected transcendent blessedness ? And doth it not at the same time demand a considerable share of the present

SERM. sent life, for the possessing our souls with those
 XVII. dispositions, which so glorious an event calls
 for? Are the very *dregs* thereof sufficient for
 this? Hath our heavenly father prepared for us
 such a state of purity and perfection, of adora-
 tion, worship, love, and praise? To what use
 then, of *equal* importance and necessity, can the
 time indulged us be applied, as to the prepar-
 ing *ourselves* for such a state, by frequent con-
 verses with God, cultivating a correspondence
 with him, in order to obtain a divine nature,
 and to be qualified for the divine love? To
 get a mind filled with a veneration of him;
 an heart delighting and centring in him; glow-
 ing with devout affections towards him; and
 resolutely intent upon his presence and love?
 For unless *such* things be in us and abound, no
 entrance *shall* or *can* be administered to us into
 the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.
 2 Pet. i. 11. But by *such* an application of
 our time, our natures would be ripening and
 perfecting by the continuance of life; our fit-
 ness would be encreasing; and we should have
 undoubted *pledges* in the dispositions of our
 minds, that we were not only candidates for,
 but *heirs* of a blessedness, every way worthy
 of a God to prepare and confer.

These are some of the purposes and ends, to
 which the present life should be *principally* ap-
 plied: whereby we evidence a wisdom that
 will

will be *always* wisdom ; which will be *allowed* SERM.
 such by the all-wise God ; and be *found* such XVII.
 by us in its consequences, through *both* the 
 states of our existence.

I shall close with two reflections.

1. We may learn from hence, whence life is more peculiarly a blessing ; and upon what account *long* life is principally desirable.

It is so, as it gives us an opportunity of improving, and providing for the best part of our natures ; and securing the ultimate end of our being ; “ the enjoyment of our God in glory.” If *to live* was only to scramble for, or rake together wealth ; to jostle and push for honour and preferment ; to run the same dull round of animal acts ; and beat the beaten track of animal pleasures—If this was the *whole* of life, I say, or the *highest* purposes to which it was applied, what could be found in it, even after a *few* years, to wish for its continuance for the sake of such ends ? Methinks we should need a good degree of *stupidity* to *bear* with it ; or *not* to *nauseate* it. If the proper employments of it were of the sensual kind, how soon should we sur vive all our pleasures ? How soon would that year come, when we should *desire* a release, if consciousness of guilt did not suppress it ; and render us willing to *endure* life, as a *less* evil than what we might *fear* ! But was its *principal* end
 duly

SERM. duly regarded, we should derive more from
 XVII. the *meaner* and more *ordinary* employments of
 it; there would be always something to yield
 satisfaction, which would not *lessen*, but en-
 crease, with our years.

To the *unprepared* for death, life is a great
 blessing; as it gives them a reprieve from mi-
 sery, and an opportunity of escaping it, by re-
 pentance. But a *long* life, unimproved to this
 end, is but adding fuel to the flames, and en-
 hancing the reckoning. To the *righteous* and
ready, life is a blessing: but it is *principally* so
 from hence; that, by their right improvement
 of it, it redounds to their advantage on the
 other side the grave; and from the lengthen-
 ing of it, the *more* seed is sown to the encrea-
 sing the plenty of their harvest, and the *more*
 service is performed, which still adds to the
 weight of their crown.

The *right* improvement of life is in every
 sense the making the most of it. *This itself*
 would prevent many calamities which are
 thought inseparable from it; because it is tak-
 ing a path, in which they are not found. It
 would be a balance to many grievances, which
 are unavoidable; as it would greatly assist the
 mind to sustain them; and furnish it with a
 prospect to set against them. There would
 not be so many complaints of it as now there
 are as dull and nauseous; nor so many groans
 under

under it as a burden. For by a wise applica- SERM.
tion of life, we might furnish ourselves with XVII.
agreeable entertainments, from the knowledge
of the most animating truths ; and the practice
of a self-rewarding goodness. No ; nor would
there be such murmuring at its shortness, nor
trembling at its uncertainty, when by such an
use of it, we were safe as to death, and fit for
an happy immortality.

2. From what hath been said it is evident,
that the *sooner* we begin *truly* to live, the wiser
and the better it will be found.

Whatever arguments enforce the improve-
ment of life in general, equally plead for a
speedy beginning. Will those who are young
permit me to be their remembrancer ? I wish
I may not, by what I say to such, reproach
any who have numbered many more years.
The leading error of youth is, that they set
out, too often by a misguided education, with
false notions of life. Such as, that the *sole* use
of it is to be masters of their business ; to get
estates ; to qualify themselves for conversation,
by what is miserably miscalled, the knowledge
of the world, or, according as it is in their
power to indulge their fancies and humours.
I am far from *censuring*, much more from
condemning, application to your callings, and
the employment of your stations : no, nor
would I in the least discourage your endeavours
to

SERM. duly regarded, we should derive more from
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 The leading error of youth is, that they set
 out, too often by a misguided education, with
 false notions of life. Such as, that the *sole* use
 of it is to be masters of their business ; to get
 estates ; to qualify themselves for conversation,
 by what is miserably miscalled, the knowledge
 of the world, or, according as it is in their
 power to indulge their fancies and humours.
 I am far from *censuring*, much more from
condemning, application to your callings, and
 the employment of your stations : no, nor
 would I in the least discourage your endeavours
 to

SERM. to rise and prosper in the world: doubtless life
 XVII. was *designed* for lower purposes, as well as
 { higher; since the one, as well as the other, is
 matter of *precept*: only as there are *nobler*
 ends, let the *lower* ones keep their place, by a
 subordination to the other. If there is some-
 thing *principally themselves*, ought it not to be
principal in life; uppermost there? Let but
 the interest and care of the soul govern, and
 the concerns of immortality *preside*, and all
 will be innocent, safe, and satisfactory. I
 wish every one, setting out in the world, would
 deliberately form, and abide by some such re-
 solution as the following one—" Sacred to
 " thee, from whom I have my being, I will
 " employ that life, thou hast bestowed.
 " Designed as I am for immortality, my own
 " perfection I will pursue. What is chief in
 " my nature, and in my interest, shall be
 " principal in my view: guarding against the
 " worst I have to fear; preparing myself for
 " the bliss I expect; and through the divine
 " help, what is the grand end of my life, in
 " my maker's design, shall be *chief* in my own
 " regards." Be wise, and live, *betimes*: it
 cannot be too soon; it may be too late. Be-
 lieve it; a mind under the power of christian
 principles, and a course governed by christian
 precepts, will, beyond every thing else, render
 the actions of life, the sources of enjoyment
 too;

too; as they will be attended with the approbation and complacency of our own minds. By conversing with divine *truths*, you will furnish yourselves with the brightest images; not visionary and romantic; but both real and interesting: with thoughts and sentiments that will *guide*, as well as entertain you; that will *preserve*, as well as recommend you; that will *support*, as well as improve you: and will introduce a greatness of mind, as will raise you above the false glitter and dazzle, by which such numbers are befooled; till they have lost sight of their relation to the father and world of spirits, and capacity for an immortal *happiness*; whilst they *retain* their capacity for an *immortal existence*.

To conclude by a word *to all*. Let us not squander away our time in impertinencies, since we have one grand business to mind; one most solemn event to prepare for. Let us not carry on a farce and jest through life; for God is in earnest; and so are all in heaven and hell; and the time approaches, when *we* shall be in earnest too. To add no more, let us not suffer our years to run away in idleness and sloth; or in what amounts to no more: since the season is hastening, when a world will not be thought too much to give for another such life, *purely* as a preparation for eternity.



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S E R M O N XVIII.



On the same S U B J E C T.



P S A L M XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our days, that we may
apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

Y O U see the principal matter of the Psalmist's prayer is wisdom; and a wisdom respecting *human life*, answering to its frailty and shortness, as God hath contracted it for the sins of men. From hence it is a petition offered to God; expressing his own desires of improving a dispensation, which in *itself* and in *its cause*, was a melancholy one; and of making

SERM.
XVIII.

SERM. ing the very best of what he could not remedy.
 XVIII. As if he had said, “ thou hast greatly reduced
 “ the life of man upon earth ! Lord help me
 “ and others, under this thine appointment,
 “ to act a wise part with respect to the time,
 “ which thou hast been pleased *yet* to allot us,
 “ by preparing for the end of it.”

I have proposed,

I. To consider the subject-matter of the Psalmist's prayer, viz. that he and others might be engaged to employ life in that manner, and to apply it to those uses and ends, for which wisdom and happiness demanded it: or, by which the one was most truly manifested, and the other most certainly attained.

Under this head, I have endeavoured, as I was naturally led, to represent to you, that application and employment of life which merits the title of wisdom; and which will be found so in its consequences. And after I had specified some of the too common, and general methods of spending our days and years, which carry both sin and shame in them, I then pointed out those uses and ends to which they ought principally to be applied, in order to render our existence truly life, and to evidence the wisdom of our conduct. As *such* purposes and ends I mentioned the four following. The perfecting the best and noblest part of our
 natures

natures—The providing against the worst, or most formidable events in which we are interested—The laying in for our present and future satisfaction—And, the securing our highest interest and noblest expectations.

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XVIII.

I now proceed to the second general.

II. To consider the *means*, the Psalmist proposes in order to attain this end; or by which he might be led to this wise and happy improvement of the present life: that was, “by the numbering of his days.”

And let it be observed here, that this is the matter of a *request to God*. “So teach us to number our days”—or as it runs in the original, that we may number our days, make us fully to know. In this the Psalmist manifestly acknowledges his dependence on divine assistance and influence, for the effectual discharge of his duty. He begs of God to *teach* or *help* him rightly to number his days, in order to the wise and happy improvement of his life. The very form of a petition, is a declaration of his *need* of the one, in order to the other.

But I would observe further, that he doth not pray that God would number his days for *him*, whatever the expression may imply; but only that God would *teach him* to do it. The act itself was his own particular duty and province; which he very plainly *engages* to dis-

SERM. charge in the best manner he could, whilst
 XVIII. he looks up for that influence which was necessary to render it effectual for his becoming wise and happy thereby. I wish this was considered, which indeed is the case as to every petition put up to God : as we thereby express our *desires* of blessings, we therein *engage* before God for the exerting our *best endeavours* ; and the use of all the means in our power, in order to the obtaining the blessings we seek. Unless *this* accompany our prayers, and follow them too, they are hypocrisy, and prophane mockery ; so that the Psalmist's request in the text, as every rational request of the same kind doth, contains these two things in it ; “ I will
 “ seriously number my days, in order to the
 “ wisest application and improvement of my
 “ life. Lord grant me all that aid and influence of thine, which is necessary and may
 “ be sufficient to render my faithful attempt
 “ successful.” Was this evident connection of things attended to, surely prayer would be found a more profitable thing, than now it is ; we should not so often unsay, retract, and confute, our own professed desires, as now I fear, is done, by our after carelessness, negligence, and unconcernedness, as to the obtaining the blessings we ask. This being premised I shall briefly consider,

What

What is meant by the numbering of our days—And then

SERM.
XVIII.

The influence which this hath by way of argument and motive, upon the improvement of human life.

First, Let us consider what is meant here by *numbering of our days*.

There is another passage much the same with this, as to expression and sense. Psal. xxxix. 4. "Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." Now by numbering our days, is not meant any positive determination, how long we shall live. There is no encouragement for fancy or imagination to work, or to pronounce preremptorily, concerning the day or time of our death. Nor doth the Psalmist in one place or the other *ask* such a discovery or revelation from God. *That*, I apprehend, would have been a very improper request, since it would have been without the least shadow of ground to expect it would have been answered. Every one must say with Isaac, "I know not the day of my death." That is one of the secrets belonging unto God, locked up in the divine mind. And we have reason to adore the divine wisdom and goodness, that hath reserved this to himself; as it is upon several accounts *best for us*, that it

SERM. is concealed from us. The numbering of our
 XVIII. days in the text therefore, cannot imply, that
 we should take upon us to determine “ what
 “ proportion of time we should see.” This
 would be to suppose, that we have light, where
 we are altogether in the dark ; and would be very
 unbecoming us to put into the form of a peti-
 tion, since we have no foundation for our faith
 and hope that it would be answered. The
 expression then, I think, implies only this in
 general, as the evidence and means of wisdom,
 “ To carry about with us an habitual sense of
 “ the shortness and uncertainty of life.” And
 when the Psalmist prays to be *taught* or made
 to know *this*, he expresses his desire of those
 influences from above, whereby his mind
 might be more thoroughly penetrated and im-
 pressed with the truth, in order to secure the
practical ends of it. But to be a little more
 particular,

1. The numbering of our days stands in
 direct opposition to the presuming upon *long life*.

We are taught in the text, and in many
 other places, to compute our lives by *days*, not
 by *years* ; and the numbering of these speaks
 them to be few and limited. Though we are
 not informed what the precise number of them
 is, yet since we know not what shall be on
 the morrow, we are assured that to count
 upon

upon *many* is *presumption* ; that it is absolutely without ground ; and that our imaginations are widely different from the truth of the case. SERM. XVIII.

The thing is not what mankind generally do ; but what in reason they ought to do ; and what, if they attended to facts and experience as well as to the word of God, they would do. Young persons more particularly imagine that *they* have a licence to promise themselves a very considerable space of time to come ; that as they are but just entered upon the world, they may reckon by *years* and not by *days* ; when it is no more than what the strength of their constitutions promises them. They are ready to insure their tabernacles to themselves for a considerable term, because they have not been *long built*. But surely this circumstance *alone* will never justify such a confidence. Do they know *how* they are built ? of what a multitude of exquisitely fine parts they consist ? some of the finest and most concealed of which failing, the whole structure falls into ruins. But however *lately* erected ; how *strong* soever they may be built, have they any *security* from the great proprietor, for any term of years ? If not, which is the case, they may be turned out at his will and pleasure, without the least warning : of which they have many instances round about them ; who
had

SERM. XVIII. had as many circumstances to justify their expectation of a long remainder of life, as any survivors can have. Whether therefore it is *believed* or not, it is *true*, That all expectations of *long* life, be the age or standing in the world what it will, betray a very mistaken method of calculating; that the rule must be false; that it rests upon no more solid a foundation than a presumptive fancy. When we are assured, “that our days are determined, that God hath appointed our bounds, “and which we cannot pass;” which expressions relate to the general period of human life: and when we are also assured, “that “the number of our months are with him,” that is, that he hath reserved a liberty to himself of *contracting* that general period as he sees fit, from what but gross inattention and presumptive flattery can we *promise* ourselves any measure of future time? Job xiv. 5. They can never have made any rational computation, nor in any sense have numbered their days, who are at *any* time of life, putting down a *great* sum at the foot of the account; or are making nature a debtor for many yet to come.

2. The numbering of our days implies, the serious and frequent reflecting on the brevity and uncertainty of life.

It

It is not supposable, that any can be ignorant of this truth, or such strangers to the world as to deny it. But it is certain, with the *most* it is thrown by as an useless or ungrateful speculation, whereby it hath no more influence, than if it was absolutely unknown or disbelieved. Let an *object* be ever so visible or affecting, if persons *shut* their eyes, or *turn* them quite away, it is *to them* as if it was *not*. The case is the same with respect to *truth*. It is only as it is by thought made the immediate subject of the mind, as this *attends* to it, and is *conversant* with it, that it gains that credit, or hath that influence, from whence we can derive any benefit. Surely our own experience is sufficient to convince us, of the vast difference in respect of *impression* between a thought passing *through* the mind, and its *staying* and *residing* there. The influence which the mind, and heart too, derives from truth, is much more governed by the mind's *pondering* upon it, than from the *nature* of the truth itself. The most indifferent trifling thing, when *dwelt* upon by thought and contemplation, will make much deeper impressions upon the mind, than the most awful and affecting truths in the world, when they but *just enter*, and then are *thrust out*. Since the text prescribes the numbering of our days as a *means* to wisdom and happiness,

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SERM. happiness, it must imply much more than the
 XVIII. having a general notion of the brevity and uncertainty of life; or a mere assenting to it as a truth when proposed. It bespeaks it to be made the chosen employment of the mind; that it be the frequent subject of our *consideration*; applied to ourselves, in order to affect the heart, to season the mind, and to determine the behaviour as a standing and important principle.

3. This expression implies, a frequent and deliberate attention to the time which is *already* past; and the daily observing how our lives waste.

In calculating the term of our continuance in this world, very few are willing to stop short of the *longest* period that is affixed to it in general. But even *then*, they compute not as they *should*. They do not number the days and years that are *gone* and *spent*, which certainly ought to be deducted: but finding no considerable abatement of vigour and strength, they reckon from *thence*; as if life then took place; and the *whole* term was still to come. But this is not numbering of our days, it is allotting and measuring out time for *ourselves*, which is the most gross fallacy and delusion. There is not a more common observation, when we look *backward*, than the *speedy flight*
of

of time. We are filled with surprize at the SERM.
number of years which we have *past*. Now XVIII.
what is *yet to come* flies with *equal* speed. 
There is no difference, but in our imaginati-
on; which makes no alteration in, nor can
have any influence on, the thing itself. The
reckoning and computation of our days, to
which the text directs us, implies a daily ob-
servation *how* life shortens; and *how* our time
diminishes. At the close of every returning
day, it is a very rational, and, one would
think, a most ready reflection: "I have now
" one day the less to live: and one more to
" give an account of. As the number which
" I have seen encreases, the sum of the *re-*
" *mainder* lessens. The more I have spent,
" the fewer I have to expect. Every day takes
" away one from mine existence here; fur-
" thers my advance towards the end of them,
" and sets me one day nearer to eternity." This
is truly numbering our days; counting them
as they pass; bringing them to their proper ac-
count, both as to what we *have* had, and what
we *may* have to come. The looking backward
on what is *gone*, would lead us to form a truer
judgment both as to the *measure* and *speed* of
what *remains*; and our daily observing the de-
ductions, which our successive days make
from the whole of our *allotted* time, would, if
any

SERM. any thing, convince us of the value of *each*
 XVIII. day; and prompt us to improve it, as it
 brings us nearer to our last. This leads me

Secondly. To consider the influence which this numbering of our days hath by way of argument and motive upon the wise improvement of human life.

To this end the Psalmist proposes this practice to himself. For the better securing this end, by this means, he implores the divine influence upon his own endeavours; that he might attain a more impressed sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life; that he might act more stately under it; and by that means might be led to a wisdom, which was in the closest connection with happiness. Our own senses and experience are sufficient to convince us of the *truth* of the thing; but there needs more than the evidence of the thing, to render it a *principle of action*; and to bring the heart and life to a stated conformity to it. To this end the divine influence and concurrence is necessary. But still there is a great *aptitude*, in the serious and frequent consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of life, to lead us to a wise improvement and application of it. Amongst others in the following ways.

I. This

1. This helps us to form a right judgment SERM.
and estimate of present things : those I mean XVIII.
which are desirable and useful in the present
state.

Though there are none, but when appealed to, will confess the vanity and unsatisfactoriness of all that the world accounts great and valuable ; though *they* are most ready to confess it, as *they* have the greatest proof of it, who know the *most of it*, yet from the suitability of these things to our lower inclinations, our judgments are too often prejudiced in their favour. They dazzle the senses, and hurry on the passions to an undue admiration and esteem, and to the engrossing of the thought and time. From hence it is that the objects of *faith* are overlooked, and those of sense usurp the esteem and affection, which these only merit. But what are the idols of the world, in the estimate of one who hath a thorough sense of the brevity and instability of a present existence ? What is their value, when considered only as a scene, or shadow, which appears for a little while, and then vanisheth ? 1 Cor. vii. 31. Under the lively sense of our own mortality, these things would glitter in vain. Under the realizing thought of their being certainly and suddenly loseable, and what could be of no use to us beyond the
bounds

SERM. bounds of this vanishing life, our estimate of
XVIII. them would be according to their *nature*.

~ This would greatly moderate our desires towards them; lower our expectations from them; and excite a dread of having our portion in them. Hereby the mind would be more at liberty to regard *higher* and *better* things; there would be more of heart for them; and more attention paid to them. When the mind is once possessed and penetrated with the great disproportion, which things that *are seen* bear to the duration of our existence, it would feel a strong conviction of the wisdom and necessity, of applying life to the concerns of eternity, and the interests of our never dying part. 2 Cor. iv. 18.

2. The numbering of our days, would lead us to a wise improvement of life, as it would give us a just sense of our *principal* work and business.

No one who thinks at all can believe, that man, so furnished as he is, was sent here by his all-wise former without design; or upon any one but what answered to his capacity and duration. However in *practice* the world seem to be divided as to the *chief* end of man, or as to the wisest and most reasonable employment of the present life; yet we might soon determine which was so, to the conviction of our

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own minds, from the scanty measure of our time SERM.
 on earth; and the *sudden* period that is often XVIII.
 out thereto. With this view of our present
 circumstance before our minds, could we ever
 doubt, whether the business for which we
 were above every other sent here, respected
 that part of us which was mortal, and continu-
 ly tending and liable to a dissolution; or to
 that *other part* which shall survive; and is de-
 signedly immortal? whether it is to provide for
 a world we are dying *from*, or that we are dy-
 ing *into*? a world where our continuance is
 absolutely *uncertain*, or that where it is appoint-
 ed, to be *everlasting*? Certainly a serious at-
 tention to the shortness and uncertainty of our
 time, whilst we must outlive it, would soon
 satisfy us, that our *main* business here, was
 very different from the gratifying the senses;
 from running the round of diversions and
 amusements; or the consuming each day in
 employments which *terminate* with this life:
 In the midst of all this, "we may in a
 moment go down into a grave." Job, xxi. 13.
 Was this the *whole* or the *principal* work,
 which he who sent us into the world hath
 given us to do, reason would be apt to pro-
 nounce, that we were made and sent here to
 any little purpose. Our very *mortality* points,
 the exercising ourselves in matters of much
 VOL. II. H h greater

SERM. greater importance. And for what doth that be
 XVIII. speak our time, our sollicitude, and chief re-
 gards? Why, very loudly for the making the
 best provision for the *longest* division of our ex-
 istence, for the rendering our immortality blis-
 ful, and the securing to our souls the enjoyment
 of their highest hopes. Our very frame, with
 what providence hath supplied us with for our
 present pilgrimage, assure us we were *designed*
 for happiness; and our work in general is to
 seek and secure it. But the shortness of the
 present life tells us, it is a vain thing to place
 it in any thing *here*; it is no other than seeking
 the living amongst the dead: because every
 thing of that kind, is as vanishing, as we are
 frail. By this light also we see that our chief
 business respects the *best* part of ourselves; the
 part that *cannot die*; and the *happiness* of the
 part in that *state of existence*, for which it was
 principally intended.

3. The numbering of our days promotes
 the best improvement of life, as it shews
 the extream folly and danger of delays.

Many a mind hath felt such a conviction
 the moment and necessity of religion, as
 produce a repeated resolution for the regarding
 it, yet without any effect: or as one expressed
 it, "they resolve, they re-resolve—then
 "the same." The reason is, their resolves are

made for *hereafter* ; so that the times they were made for come and go, and their resolves are still unexecuted. The cause of this is, their presuming upon *futurity* ; or the presumptuous promises which they make to themselves, of seeing those days and seasons, when their designs are to take place. Evident therefore it is, that were we but as sensible of and attentive to the frailty of human life, as we ought to be, it would lead to another kind of conduct, by engaging us to redeem the *present* time. How could any one who counted their days, or observed how their lives wasted, prevail upon themselves to postpone any thing important and necessary ? “ alas ! is this life, “ which is my only state of trial, so short, and “ to me altogether uncertain ! doth every flying hour deduct from the remainder, and “ leave me so much less ; and may it be entirely at an end ere I am aware ! shall I “ then hazard an immortal soul, and risque “ eternal bliss, by *adjourning* my regards “ thereto, when I may be surprized by my “ last day ! and time, by the to-morrow, may “ be no more *to me* !” By numbering our days, we should procure a more influencing sense, that no time was *ours*, but the *present moment*. And therefore nothing *future* could with any *certainty* be allotted *by us* for any purpose,

SERM. pose, because it would be to dispose of that
XVIII. which is *not ours*. This being the case, we
should see the wisdom and necessity of improving the *present* conviction, of seizing the *present* hour, and executing the *present* purpose. We should truly husband the remainder; and by how much the less that remainder appeared, the more saving, and diligent, we should see it became us to be.

In these respects would the numbering of our days prompt us to the wise improvement of life: and from this, accompanied, as we might hope it would be, with a divine influence, we might propose, as the Psalmist doth, to reap signal advantage, both as to our present and everlasting satisfaction. The sentence of mortality indisputably extends to *all* mankind, though some may be reprieved for a little longer term than others. We are also upon a level, as to our capacity of surviving the grave. We must all die, that we may be immortal. There is but one, and the same way, of attaining a *blissful* immortality. For this end life is *given*; and consequently ought to be *improved* thereto: and what is a wise improvement of it to *one*, is equally so to *all*. From hence we are *equally* interested in this subject; nor do I know of any that would be found more extensively useful.

That

That we may apply our hearts, or set ourselves SERM.
in good earnest to *experience* the benefit of it, XVIII.
I would suggest two or three motives, with
which I will close the subject.

1. Let us consider that our wisdom and happiness are inseparable.

Though this state was never intended to yield a *perfect* and *adequate* felicity to such a creature as man, yet the wiser part we act, the more of happiness shall we know. In every article of unreasonable conduct respecting *another* state, we are proportionably sufferers in *this*. And great goodness is manifested by this constitution of things: in that if the divine precepts do not guide us, our own senses might correct us, and reduce us, by what we feel, to the prescriptions of divine wisdom. From hence it follows, that the wisest application of human life, is accompanied with the truest relish of it; and the best improvement, is attended by the truest enjoyment. In losing or abusing it, in wasting and squandering it, we defeat the ends of goodness and patience; and revenge our folly and dissingenuity upon ourselves. The design of God in all his dispensations towards the children of men, is his own glory, in conjunction with our felicity. This being *his* design, his perfect wisdom assures us of the *aptitude* of the *means*. They are the

SERM. *best* because *he* hath prescribed them; and we
 XVIII. are sure, if followed they shall produce their
 ends. Now if that be our felicity, wherein we
 are wise in the divine estimate, we are assuredly
 happy. It may not secure us a reputation for
 it, with the greatest part of the world; but,
 which is much more desirable, it will establish
 one with *ourselves*; and the testimony for wis-
 dom will be confirmed by the happiness.

2. Let us consider, what is wisdom in every
 other instance *worth*, if we are fools in *this*?

If we are soul as well as body; if we are
 related to eternity as well as time, the true
 wisdom of man must be estimated by those
 acts whereby his *nobler*, as well as meaner,
 part is consulted. If this be so, it follows
 that it doth not lie *merely* in the exercise of rea-
 son; but in the application of it, in *such* ways,
 and to *such* purposes, as come the nearest to
 his maker's chief design; and bear the nearest
 proportion to man's own *highest* capacity. If
 there is any *obligation* upon a reasonable crea-
 ture to exercise it *at all*, we must acknowledge
 it is still *stronger* for the using it in the *best* man-
 ner, and to the *most valuable* purposes, which
 it is given us to subserve. What is all the rea-
 soning and wisdom in the world as to a *personal*
 advantage, or even reputation, where the one
 is suspended, and the other manifestly wanting,
 in

in matters of the *greatest* importance and of SERM.
 the *last* consequence? When we say of any XVIII.
 one, as we have too often reason to do, that
 they have all sense, but common sense, it doth
 not carry any *encomium* in it, but a *brand* and
 a *reflection*. It is in a manner declaring them
 destitute of it in general; as they manifest the
 want of it in circumstances, wherein, beyond
 all others, it would be most serviceable, even
 in those articles whercin their safety and happi-
 ness are *peculiarly* concerned. If a person had
 a sight to discern things at *some miles* distance,
 but could see nothing *before* him or *about* him,
 nor distinguish day from night in the place
 where he was, we should not, I believe,
 reckon his sight very good, nor envy him the
 happiness of it; but should rather rank him
 amongst the *blind*. In like manner, what is
 all the wisdom respecting this world and the
 affairs of it, whilst in the concerns of our
 souls, and of eternity, we betray the most
 egregious folly? Or what is all knowledge and
 speculation even about *those* things, if the *con-*
duct and *behaviour* is not governed by it? To
 want wisdom where folly is *most fatal*, and to
 exercise it *only* in matters of *small moment*; to
 want it in our very *profession*, and to betray the
 rankest folly where we have *most* depending;
this can never be balanced or made up by any

SERM. degree of sagacity or management in *any other*
 XVIII. instance : it can go for nothing with *ourselves*,
 in a rational estimate, any more than with the
 judge of all the earth. Nay, it must render
 such folly the just ground of an *aggravated*
 condemnation ; since it is not want of capa-
 city, but a *wilful* perverseness and stupidity,
 into which such a conduct must be resolved.

3. All wisdom for the other world, as well
 as for this, comes too late when the present
 life ends : whatever turns to any benefit must
 be evidenced *before*.

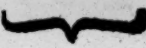
Though the soul retains its activity and
 powers when separated from the body, and
 will have a more intense sense, and a more
 perfect discernment of the errors of a past con-
 duct ; yet from the time of its separation, it
 will be unable to do any thing towards the
amending or *retrieving* what is past. The
 folly of wasting and perverting life, will *then*
 appear in a clearer and more affecting light
 than ever it could do here ; and every such
 abuse would it *gladly then* rectify. But the
 judgment it *then* passes on it, comes too late for
 service. Had it been timely, it might have
 produced an amendment of conduct ; it might
 have contributed to the recovery of what had
 been lost ; and to that saving of time, as to
 prevent the wretchedness of a *former* extrava-
 gant

gant consumption. But this life being come SERM.
 to a period, there is no *room* for the exercise XVIII.
 of wisdom, the retrieving the effects of past
 folly. “ With every breath I draw, may
 “ each of us say, its total cessation advances ;
 “ nor have I any security that the next shall not
 “ be the last. But oh ! what important issues
 “ rest on this fleeting circumstance ! This life,
 “ a vapour, a moment as it is, is all I have
 “ to *manage* for the interest of an immortal
 “ soul ! *On this*, the gain of an eternal crown
 “ is now suspended ; which, if lost, is lost
 “ beyond recovery.”—Shall yet this awful
 truth sit lightly on the mind ? and unreflected
 on, have still no light to instruct, no power to
 move to that practical wisdom in the appli-
 cation of our *transitory days*, as shall be *found*
 to have been wisdom for *those years*, which
 will *never never end* ? If we would derive any
 solid and saving benefit from just sentiments of
 things, let us form and follow them *now*.
 Death cuts off all advantage from them. They
 may afterwards upbraid and sting ; but they
 can *rectify* nothing : they may produce re-
 morse ; but no satisfaction to the mind, no
 amendment of state and circumstances.

I hope all of us have been laying this mat-
 ter to heart ; as all must be conscious that we
 stand chargeable with too great waste of that
 inestimable

SERM. inestimable talent, *life*. Where is that thrift,
 XVIII. that avarice of time, which already *numbered*
 and finished years would inspire? If it is a
 serious thing to die, it must be an important
 thing *truly* to live. The certain and awfully
 different consequences of the *former*, impart a
 vast moment to the *latter*, as they will be go-
 verned by it. Have not many of us reason
 to adore the divine mercy and patience, that
 whilst we have too much overlooked the *chief*
 end of life, or have been guilty of squander-
 ing the greatest part of what might have been
 improved to the most valuable purposes, the
 God in whose hands our breath is, hath not
 issued out the order, cut them down; why
 cumber they the ground! Upon such a con-
 viction, what can be more reasonable or wise,
 than a resolution for the redeeming the *re-*
maining time in the best manner, by improv-
 ing the *present* as it takes place? To make up
 for former waste and trifling by future dili-
 gence; and by a more careful application of
 what is left, to the most *important* purposes of
 life.

May the God of all grace teach us to rate
 our present life by its *connection* with an *after*
 state of existence, and by the influence it will
 have upon our *immortal* interest! Since the
 day of life is the season of grace, may we act
 up

up to the *true* intent, and make the *most* of SERM.
it: and by piety, virtue, usefulness, and an XVIII.
habitual regard to God in the lower affairs of 
life, may we lay in all we can; since *much*
will be found necessary, to a comfortable re-
view of it at death, and the giving up our
account of it at last with joy.

END of the SECOND VOLUME.



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January 23rd 1904

